

# Socialist Organiser

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Claimants and strikers 10p

20p

## SCRAP THE BOMB!



**NATO's nuclear arsenal threatens us with annihilation. Sufficient fire power already exists to wipe out the human race many times over.**

While education and health services are cut to ribbons, the Thatcher government, and the right wing of the Labour Party, want to spend billions on weapons of mass murder.

And military planning by NATO high command will further increase the danger of nuclear war.

The great accuracy of the new Trident and Tomahawk missiles means that they can be aimed against small, hard military targets such as missile silos, rather than large, civilian targets which are threatened by larger less accurate weapons. NATO tops headed by Carter freely admit that the new weapons would be used pre-emptively against the USSR.

*In other words, NATO plans are for starting a nuclear war.*

Military logic dictates that Russian commanders must now plan to pre-empt the pre-emptive strikes from the West. Thus the whole nuclear threshold is lowered, and the knife edge on which we live becomes narrower.

Britain, already a base for American nuclear bombing aircraft and submarines, as well as Britain's 'independent deterrent' force, is to provide bases for both Trident and

by ALASDAIR  
JAMISON

Tomahawk missiles. Strategically Britain will become even more the US's unsinkable aircraft carrier with a greater concentration of nuclear bases, and therefore nuclear targets, than any other country in Europe.

Only mass action, centred on the Labour movement, can prevent this new escalation in the nuclear war drive from becoming a reality.

*The Labour Party conference voted for unilateral disarmament. But Denis Healey and Peter Shore have made it clear they intend to ignore that vote. Only organised campaigning in the labour movement, linked with the protests on the streets, can make sure we get a leadership willing to scrap the Bomb.*

Trade unions, Labour parties and campaign groups must be committed to fight against the siting of Cruise and Trident missiles in Britain, for unilateral nuclear disarmament, and for Britain's withdrawal from NATO.

These demands are essential to stop Britain being a nuclear target and to prevent the British working class being a party to the planned slaughter of millions of working class people in Eastern Europe.

### Protest and survive

March and rally organised by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Supported by the Labour Party.

**Sunday October 26th:**  
Assemble 11am at Hyde Park/  
Rally 2.30pm in Trafalgar Square.



## Inside



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Below: the new Solidarity union organising in the shipyards



## H-Block: Their horror, our shame

**"WE DECLARE that political status is ours as of right, and we declare that from Monday, 27 October 1980 a hunger strike by a number of men representing H-Blocks 3, 4 and 5 will commence".**

If the Republican prisoners of Long Kesh and Armagh are forced to go through with their action, there will be deaths within weeks, as the prison authorities have made it clear that they will not undertake force feeding and will leave the prisoners to die.

When the Labour Government abolished political status in 1976, these prisoners declared they would not accept being defined as criminals. They refused to wear prison uniform.

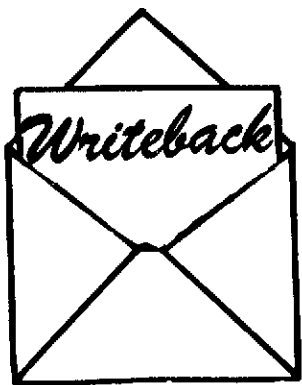
Since then they have been harassed and deprived of exercise, books, most visits and letters, and free association with each other. They have been forced into escalating their protest. In response to prison officers denying or giving them the right to use the toilet at whim, they started

the 'dirty protest' — no wash, no slop out. The response from Fleet Street, Whitehall, Westminster, and most of the British labour movement: blank silence. Now the prisoners are planning a hunger strike.

The Republicans are demanding the right to wear their own clothes, to abstain from prison work, to associate freely, to organise their own education and recreation, to have full rights to visits and letters, and to get full remission of their sentences. The response of the British government has been an attempt to break their spirit and their will to resist. But the prisoners have made it clear that they will fight 'to the bitter climax of death' if necessary.

It is the shame of the British labour movement that these prisoners have for so long suffered inhuman conditions at the hands of any army of occupation acting in our name.

We must not now allow the Tories to send them to their deaths, inflicting a serious blow against the movement for the liberation of Ireland. And there is very little time.



A letters page  
for the labour  
movement

Write back to:  
Socialist Org-  
aniser, 5 Stam-  
ford Hill,  
London N16.

## We should sidewith Iran

WE BELIEVE Iran should be supported against Iraq. Let us briefly explain why.

First of all the common ground. Both Iran and Iraq are capitalist states (though hardly normal ones) and both states are oppressors not only of the working masses but also of national minorities.

This is clearest in the case of Iran, which is a patchwork of nationalities: there are an estimated 5½ million Kurds, 1 million Baluchis, 1 million Arabs, 750,000 Turcomans and 11 million Azerbaijanis.

But Iraq is not fundamentally different: there the Kurds are again an oppressed national minority, but more, the ruling group is composed of people largely from a single clan among the minority Sunni Muslim population, while the vast majority of Arabs in Iraq are Shi'a Muslims, as in Iran.

Thus both states have the same class character and neither will be an opponent of absolutism or a liberator of national minorities.

However, Iraq's invasion of Iran does two things that must be opposed. Firstly Iraq's invasion of Iran is a denial of the self-determination of Iran. That is true, even though the area under attack (and partial occupation) is in a province which has been the victim of national oppression by Iran.

### Invasion

The province of Khuzestan (previously called Arabistan) was that part of the Persian Empire (and later of Iran) in which the majority population were Arabs. By means of a policy of 'Persianisation', which included discriminatory employment practices, the Arabs lost their clear majority, though the government does not dispute that most of the population is of Arab origin. It is not possible to know exactly what the real numbers are - the government claims the Arabs are not a minority in the province except in the rural areas.

No one worthy of the name of Marxist would oppose the right to self-determination of the Khuzestani Arabs. It does seem, however, that they have consistently demanded not secession but cultural and political autonomy. (Of course, this more modest demand might mask a bolder one, but there is some evidence - not least the attitude of these Arabs to Iraq's invasion - that autonomy is what they really want).

Iraq's invasion seems calculated far more as an attempt to cripple the Iranian regime and have it replaced by the forces Iraq has been supporting since the fall of the late Shah:

ex-Prime Minister Bakhtiar, imperialism's great hope, and General Oveissi, the 'butcher of Tehran', responsible for the Tehran massacres of 1963 and 1979.

Secondly, Iraq's action, if it is successful, will enormously strengthen imperialism. While most of the anti-imperialist rhetoric of the Khomeini regime is dangerous demagoguery, and while it would be absurd to see in that regime a stable anti-imperialist force, the fact is that imperialism has been weakened by the fall of the Shah. Iran's refusal to police the area for imperialism and its change of policy within OPEC both constitute a set-back for imperialism.

### Puppet

Iraq is not a puppet of imperialism. Nor is it simply a staging post for imperialism. Still, even while maintaining its links with the Soviet Union, it has shifted considerably towards the camp of imperialism (and the US has shown its willingness to establish a new relationship with Baghdad). Now the Iraqi Ba'athists led by Saddam Hussein hope to strengthen themselves by gaining from imperialism the franchise as policeman of the Gulf.

Attacking Iran's oil-producing areas is very unlikely to have been a tactic advocated by imperialism. Still, Iraq knows what will bring for her the approval of the US, Britain and France, and others - even while these states are not completely confident that they can trust Iraq.

For these two reasons: the denial of self-determination and the strengthening of imperialism, the struggle of the Iranians to oust the Iraqis should be supported.

Does this mean support for the Khomeini regime? Not at all. If Trotsky advocated refusing to vote for war credits for the Republican regime in Spain - quite rightly - on the grounds that revolutionary socialists do not support the arming of the bourgeoisie and do not place confidence in their ability to conduct the struggle, all the more so would Trotskyists today in Iran refuse any support to the Khomeini regime. Arms for the bourgeoisie means arms against the workers.

But we should support the workers of Iran arming against the invasion from Iraq. This in no way cuts across our unreserved support for the right of nations of Iran (obviously of Iraq too) to struggle for their own freedom against the oppressor Iranian state.

JAMES DAVIES  
COLIN FOSTER

## What a left paper needs to do

THANK YOU for your letter about the launching of *Socialist Organiser*. I'm sorry I shall be unable to attend the Edinburgh meeting but it goes without saying that I wish the venture every success.

I think, of course, that it is important to have newspapers on the left, not only to express a point of view, but also - and more importantly - to help raise the political understanding of the working class and to support activists in the struggle ahead.

In addition, left-wing newspapers should offer

constructive criticism where necessary, so that real leadership is developed at all levels of our movement.

I'm sure that *SO* will live up to this role and I only wish we had many more newspapers to do this political work.

Please keep me informed on developments - including your proposed meeting on cuts.

Best wishes,

Ron Brown MP.

PS Perhaps you should read the letter to the meeting so that everyone knows my views.

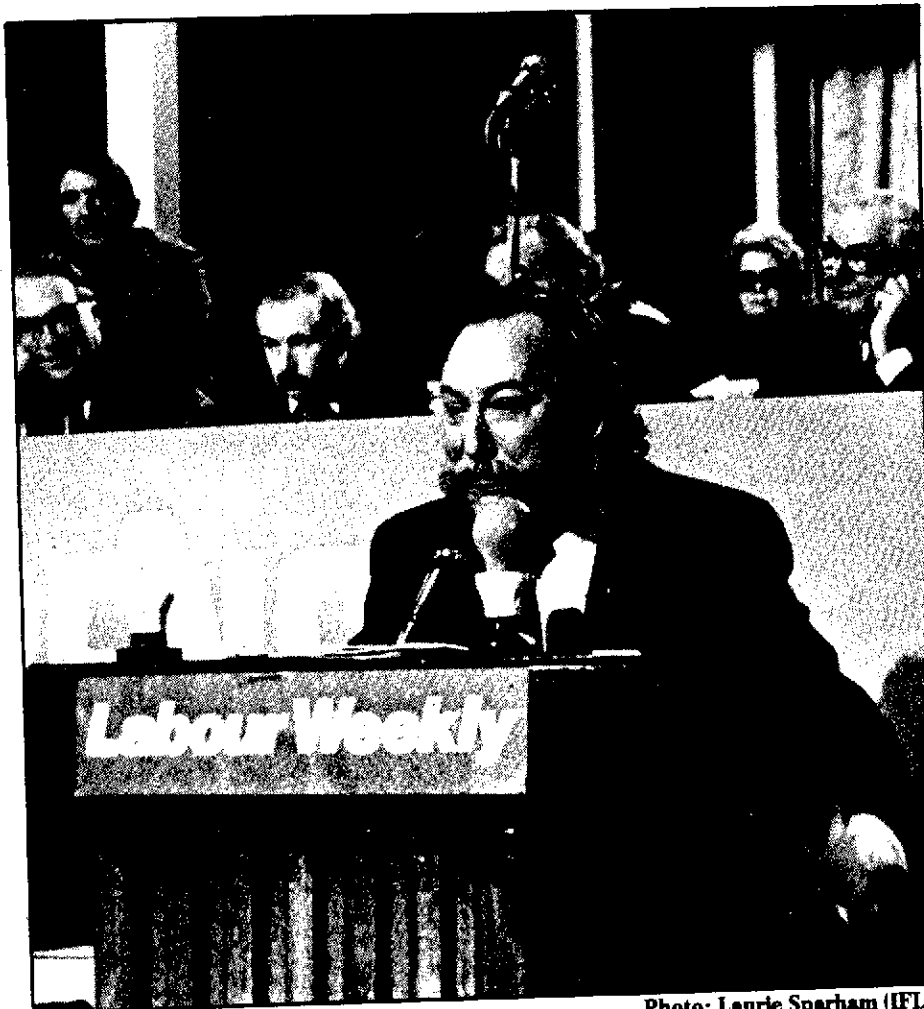


Photo: Laurie Sparham (IFL)

## How Tom Jackson 'consults' his members

Dear Comrades,

Jo Thwaites, in her article on the Labour Party Conference, mentions the hypocrisy of right-wing union leaders getting up at the rostrum and pleading that they hadn't been able to consult their members over the issue of electing the leader.

Star of this particular show was our own(?) Tom Jackson. He's obviously got a short memory as well as a

complete lack of principles.

At the May Conference of our union my own branch, the largest in the union, put forward an amendment criticising the leadership for voting against the three reforms at the last Labour conference.

This would have given us the chance to discuss the whole issue and to decide our policy on the reforms in a democratic way.

In all probability confer-

ence would have backed the leadership. But our amendment wasn't even taken.

The reason? Lack of time. So much for consulting the membership! Meanwhile, we are all waiting with baited breath to see how Honest Tom intends to consult us this time round.

PETE KEENLYSIDE  
Manchester Amalgamated  
Branch, Union of  
Communication Workers

## The secret death sentences

...it's the  
poor what  
gets the  
blame...

LAST WEEK a man admitted to prison was deprived of tablets that he needed to stay alive. He was a diabetic and had a serious heart condition. According to prison service officials, the pills were taken to check them.

Within hours the man was dead.

The story received scant attention from the press, though prison conditions are receiving a bit of attention now that the warders

have gone on strike.

A new report written for the National Council of Civil Liberties by Roger Geary reveals that last year the death rate in British prisons took another sharp increase. At the same time prison suicides have leapt to twice the figure of only two years ago and now stand at over six times the national average outside prison.

The scandal of Britain's prisons - what a cliché that is - gets worse day by day. At present close on 45,000 prisoners are locked into space "designated" for 38,500. The Tories' law and order pogrom will soon add to that! But the prisons are not just cramped for space. They are cramped by crime-covering secrecy and bureaucratic callous-

ness. Why, for instance, is the highest death rate in Brixton prison, where most inmates have not even been convicted of a crime but are on remand?

Why was George Wilkinson, dying and in a coma after refusing food and water, not moved to intensive care after being transferred to Strangeways jail? He died 24 hours later. In what way was he a "security risk"? Why had he been kept in isolation for 33 months? Why had he been refused leave to marry?

Why was Matthew O'Hara denied insulin in Pentonville? (Surely no one can believe the authorities' story that he didn't tell them he was a diabetic).

Why was the jury at the coroner's inquest into

## What should we do about the block vote?

Dear Comrades,

I would like to comment on your otherwise excellent coverage of the Labour Party conference. This relates to the question of the block vote.

The article 'Half a Revolution' by John O'Mahony quite rightly points out that the left's reliance on the block vote is a source of great weakness, and berates the unions for their lack of democracy (quite right again). Then however the question is left in the air.

What are we to do about the block vote? It seems to me that it is clearly undemocratic - at the moment even a union like the AUEW which has (at least formally) a relatively democratic structure. Can the block vote be made democratic or should it be scrapped? These are questions to which *Socialist Organiser* should apply itself.

There is nothing wrong at all with the trade unions dominating Congress, after all if we are serious when we say the Labour Party is the political arm of our movement then it is quite right that the unions with their 12,000,000 membership should have a say, and a big one at that, in deciding policy.

What is wrong however is the way the trade union block vote dominates conference and the way the rank and file are not consulted or involved in the way the votes are cast.

Finally, I did not know this until a few days ago, and maybe other *SO* readers are not aware of it, but formally there is nothing to stop a union putting a split vote (e.g. 60% for a motion and 40% against) instead of all for or all against. It just happens to be accepted practice that the vote cast is always 100% for or against. Is this correct? If so, this could be a worthwhile avenue of investigation when looking into the democratisation of the block vote.

JOHN CUNNINGHAM  
Sheffield SO

the mysterious death of Richard 'Cartoon' Campbell this March told that they could not return a verdict of death by neglect by the authorities? He died shortly after being released.

Why are coroners' juries open to police vetting?

Capitalism encourages the myth that crime is the result of individual rather than social evil. It therefore punishes the individuals and encourages the idea that "they're just getting what's coming to them". Having thus victimised a "criminal class", it deprives prisoners of almost all civil rights and shrouds its own misdeeds in secrecy.

Roger Geary's pamphlet lifts the veil on these crimes of the system. It's our job to tear it apart.

# Benn should be Labour leader

INEVITABLY the barons of the Parliamentary Labour Party have played the only big card they had left after Blackpool.

Callaghan resigned so that the PLP could organise a coup and install a leader of its choice — probably Denis Healey — who would then threaten a split between the PLP and the rest of the Party unless he is endorsed by whatever electoral college is decided on at the January conference.

Once elected in November, Healey would have nearly three months to manoeuvre and blackmail the Party and even the union leaders to overthrow the decision in favour of an electoral college or gut it of meaning. These were the sort of tactics used by Galt-skill (and Healey and

Rodgers) to defeat the 1960 decision for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

What a disgusting farce! Mouthful claptrap to the press about democracy, the PLP is claiming that its 268 members count for more than the rest of the labour movement put together. Under the present system they do.

In fact, Tony Benn should be the leader of the Party.

All the indicators, from attendance at his meetings to opinion polls, show that he is overwhelmingly the choice of the members of the Labour Party. It is a measure of how undemocratic the present system is that he has no chance of being elected under the barons' franchise which now determines who is Labour leader.

Benn is pledged to respect and fight for the policies the labour movement decides to pursue. He has shown a healthy contempt for the PLP by refusing to stand and thus lend credence and legitimacy to the barons' rump election. He is absolutely right not to stand.

Socialist Organiser has many political differences with Tony Benn. As we have argued in SO articles, he will inevitably disappoint those who now expect so much from him — indeed he will lead the labour movement to a catastrophic defeat — if he continues to stand on his inadequate present policies, or if the Party and the labour movement confine themselves to his policies.

Trying just to clip the capitalist tiger's claws and

file down its teeth is a sure way, to get your head bitten off — like Salvador Allende did.

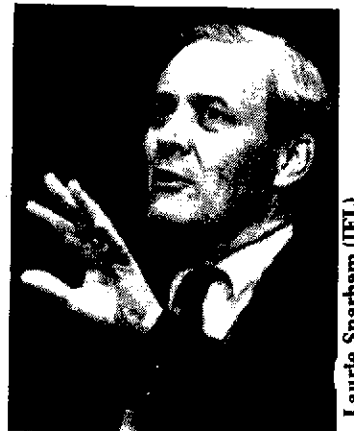
But the movement around Benn will grow and develop in the political struggles ahead, aided by the activity and ideas of the revolutionary Marxists in Labour's ranks. Will Benn himself develop? Perhaps. But in any case political clarity will come easier and sooner if Benn is elected leader than if he is blocked by the PLP barons and trade union bureaucrats and plays the role of a 'King over the water' or 'Peron in Spain' — with many workers expecting great things from an untried leader whose weak policies remain untried and thus can keep a hold on the movement. If they stop Benn being lead-

er, that will hinder the development of the movement towards revolutionary politics.

And it is a matter of elementary democracy for socialists to demand that Benn should be leader of the Party. The Right say the Left are only looking for a system to get Benn elected. No so. The point is that under any democratic system he would be virtually certain of election.

But any system so organised that the democratic choice is automatically excluded because of a privileged franchise is a farce — an insult to the labour movement to the very idea of working class democracy.

We must use their system for now to get the best results out of it so that we can make a radical change



Laurie Sparham (TFL)

in it. For now that means that all the pressure that can be concentrated should be brought to bear on the MPs to elect Michael Foot as caretaker leader.

But Socialist Organiser says clearly what many thousands of people in the labour movement think: After January Tony Benn should be leader of the Labour Party. And then we'll see.

JOHN O'MAHONY

## The RFMC's 5 principles

1. Annual elections — mandatory when the Party is in opposition, and optional (to be decided by simple majority) when in office.
2. Voting at Conference, with direct voting for every organisation and MP.
3. At least two-thirds of the total for CLPs and trade unions, with the PLP vote not to exceed that of CLPs.
4. Recorded voting, details to be available to every affiliated organisation, without which accountability is impossible.
5. Full provision for casual vacancies, on the lines of the CLPD constitutional amendment.

## WHAT THE LEFT MUST DO

DENIS HEALEY was thrown off the National Executive Committee by the Labour Party membership in 1975. Since then he has not dared to stand for the NEC.

Now the MPs are threatening to impose Healey on the Party as leader. And both Healey and his main rival, Peter Shore, insist that if the MPs don't like whatever leader is elected by the Party, then the Party will have to accept the MPs' choice.

What should be done?

• Constituency Labour Parties (and trade union branches, through their delegates to CLPs) should demand that their MPs support moves to suspend Parliamentary Labour Party standing orders so that Michael Foot, as deputy leader, stands in as leader until the January special conference.

Anything else is an attempt to cheat and frustrate the Party's decision for a more democratic method of election.

Failing suspension of standing orders, MPs should vote for Michael Foot as the leader least likely to pre-empt the January conference.

• The left and the Labour rank and file must be united to swing maximum support behind a clear democratic proposal for an electoral college.

The Rank and File Mobilising Committee will be organising a united campaign around five principles for the electoral college (see inset). Socialist Organiser believes that the best formula to fill out these principles and get a united campaign is an electoral college of 38% trade unions, 2% socialist societies, 30% CLPs, and 30% MPs — with annual election, at conference, and with recorded votes.

By rights there should be no vote for MPs. MPs should be Party members delegated to do a particular job: that's all. But the job now is to get a formula which will extend democracy — and win at the Jan-

uary special conference.

40:30:30 is midway between the two proposals narrowly rejected in Blackpool, 1/3-1/3-1/3 and 50:25:25. It is the basic formula approved by the NEC in Blackpool (though the precise way the NEC put forward 40:30:30 had serious faults).

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has put forward a similar formula, only with 30% for MPs and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates instead of for MPs. The aim behind the provision for PPCs — to cut down the weight given to MPs, and give more representation to CLPs in Tory seats — is one we sympathise with. But here and now the PPCs clause will probably just give right-wingers a chance to quibble and rally opinion against reform.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee wants 1/3-1/3-1/3. Militant wants 40:30:30 without PPCs (though unfortunately in their editorial they identify this with the NEC's Blackpool formula and don't mention annual elections and recorded vote).

All these groups should be urged to unite behind one agreed formula.

• In any case, resolutions should go in now in trade union branches calling on the unions to vote for any proposal satisfying the RFMC's five principles.

• MPs who arrogantly try to place themselves above the Party should be firmly reminded by their CLPs that mandatory re-election is coming up. If they don't want to carry out the decisions of the Labour Party, they can go elsewhere.

## LABOUR LEADER ELECTION

# THE CRUCIAL ISSUES

VLADIMIR DERER, secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, talked to Socialist Organiser.

There are three major principles as CLPD see it.

★ One is that the range in which the proportions in which the various sections of the Party are to be represented in the college should be defined between 50% for trade unions, 25% for CLPs and 25% for the PLP, at one extreme, and the 1/3, 1/3, 1/3, position on the other.

★ The second important principle is that the election for the leader should be done on an annual basis. Conference should have the option every year to elect or re-elect that existing leader of the Party.

★ The next important principle is that all votes should be recorded. This of course is solely for MPs. By and large the votes of the CLPs and the trade unions are already known, as the CLPs mandate their delegates and the unions hold their meetings on how they will vote prior to conference.

In itself, recording votes would not be an innovation, but it would formalise the present position, so as there could not be any mistakes as to how the various delegates voted. It would be an innovation for MPs, who at present vote in secret and are not mandated.

We consider this to be absolutely vital if accountability is to mean anything at all in relation to the important choice of who is to be leader of the Party.

Apart from these three principles, there is the question of the Prospective Parliamentary Candidates. CLPD has always included them in our formula for the electoral college. The exclusion of the PPCs is not warranted on principled grounds. A large proportion of the PPCs are potential MPs and could be asked to be treated as Parliamentarians.

■ ■ ■ What other formu-



"If you keep on digging, we'll jump"

Ivan Wells

lations are likely to come up? What are the dangers?

VD: At this stage it is likely that the proportions 40:30:30, 1/3-1/3-1/3 and possibly 50:25:25 will come up again and will command wide support among those submitting constitutional amendments. What we must ensure is that the variants are presented in a setting which will guarantee that the other two principles, annual election and recorded voting, are also included in these proposals.

For this reason the Mobilising Committee, quite rightly, agreed that it would support any proportions within the range I've mentioned — provided the other important principles were included in the amendment.

The dangers are only too obvious when we look back at the Blackpool conference. For instance, it would be possible for amendments to concentrate simply on the question of the proportions — 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 is very popular — and to ignore the important issues of annual election and the recorded vote.

This would make for a

very weakened version of the college, which in the end might not make a lot of difference to the present system.

There are other dangers. Opponents of the democratic reforms could try to push through something which might be even worse than what we've got at present.

It is therefore very important that the principles CLPD supports, along with the Mobilising Committee become widely known so that CLPs and affiliated organisations are sufficiently well-versed and informed of the dangers that the opponents of reform are likely to come up with.

■ ■ ■ What needs to be done between now and January 24th?

VD: We need to win massive support for the amendments put forward by CLPD and the other affiliated organisations in the Mobilising Committee from the CLPs and affiliated organisations. Delegates with minority positions are generally prevailed upon to withdraw their resolutions, so we need a large body of CLPs and affiliated organisations behind a few strong proposals.

■ ■ ■ What about the present leadership machinations?

VD: The PLP attempts to elect a new leader before the January conference are clearly in defiance of the conference decision. They are obviously trying to install a new leader who will be difficult to get rid of after January. The saying goes 'Possession is 9 points of the law'.

Our first task must be to prevent this election. Michael Foot, as Deputy Leader, should stand in until the January conference has met and decided how to elect the new Leader.

■ ■ ■ To achieve this we have to get the PLP to suspend their standing orders. They can do this without difficulty because there are precedents. These are conditions that warrant it. It is important that we have a caretaker leader who would abide by the decisions of conference and stand only temporarily.

If Foot will not stand and there is no other candidate who would act as caretaker, then we should advocate a boycott of the election. The PLP are trying to make a pre-emptive strike to defend their privileges and are acting against the decisions of conference. Such an election must be discredited.

If such an election goes ahead, I think we must stop Healey at all costs. If he won, there would be a major crisis in the Party. There would be a direct conflict between the PLP and conference which could eventually result in a complete split.

■ ■ ■ What about the letter signed by 62 MPs saying that the PLP should elect its own leader whatever the Party wants?

VD: This is primarily a matter for the constituencies. MPs have to be reminded that re-election will be coming up shortly. They should be asked by an emergency meeting of the Constituency to withdraw their names and vote for the suspension of standing orders so that a caretaker leader can be installed.

'MURDERERS', 'terrorists', and 'fanatics', are some of the more polite descriptions of the IRA in the British press.

The government also does all it can to avoid admitting that the IRA has political ideas and objectives: it criminalises the Republican prisoners; it refuses even to discuss negotiations on political solutions with the Republicans; it talks only of a military solution — a crushing of the IRA and its supporters among the Catholics in the North.

This is sometimes even echoed by socialists who talk of the Provisionals' supposed 'anti-Protestant sectarianism', 'individual terrorism', or 'reactionary ideas' as an excuse for not supporting them against the British state.

Tim Pat Coogan is not sympathetic to the IRA. But his book provides facts to counter the myths.

For example, he writes of the Provisionals and their campaign over the last ten years: "When thinking of the IRA operatives one should not visualise hardened neo-psychopaths of ice-cold nerve. There are a few, but they are a minority. This may sometimes seem very hard to accept... but the IRA make a firm and fixed distinction between attacks on UDR and RUC personnel and sectarian assassination."

## 1916

"It is official IRA policy (broken only very rarely and in exceptional circumstances) that a Protestant is not a target for his religion... The only time civilian casualties have been deliberately caused was during the British campaign... The majority of volunteers are young working class men and

as a chance to win Irish independence while Britain was busy fighting Germany. The 1916 Easter Rising, though defeated, marked the start of a five year war, in which the IRA was the organised militia of the Irish population, which had overwhelmingly voted for candidates committed to Irish independence in the 1918 General Election.

The IRA fought a guerilla campaign which was eventually successful, despite acts like the destruction of the city of Cork by the Black and Tans.

## Treaty

But there were important differences on the anti-British side, which came to a head when the British offered a compromise peace to a war-weary population. The dispute was not between socialists and their opponents — most of the would-be socialists, including the newly founded Irish Labour Party, accepted that "Labour must wait" until the national struggle was over. It was about whether the British terms, which included an oath of allegiance to the British king, partition of the country and British control of certain parts of Ireland, should be accepted.

The result was a civil war in which the Republicans, who urged rejection of anything short of full independence, were seriously defeated by the pro-Treaty 'Free Staters'.

Yet this defeat did not mean the end of the IRA. The 1921 Treaty had not resolved the issues over which the war had been fought. As time went past, and the Northern Irish state consolidated itself, partition came to be the focus for the IRA's activity.

For much of the period between 1922 and 1969, the IRA was not a major political or military force.

## BRUCE ROBINSON reviews 'The IRA', a history by Tim Pat Coogan

either parliamentary 'constitutional' politics, or militant socialist politics. The parliamentary option was anathema to traditional Republicans, who favoured abstention from all Parliaments until a 32 County Republic existed. (This was one element in the split between the Officials and Provisionals in 1969).

The first 'constitutional' movement was founded in 1926 when de Valera, the Republicans' main leader in the Civil War, split to launch Fianna Fail, which has been the governing party in the South for most of the time since the early '30s. Helped to power by the IRA in 1932, it quickly turned on them and began internment of Republicans in the mid '30s. Despite its occasional use of republican rhetoric, Fianna Fail is nothing but an open capitalist party.

## Strikes

The other response to the failure of purely military politics was to move towards the left. In the early '30s, in the midst of the depression, one section of the Republican leadership began political campaigning on a socialist basis, and founded two organisations to do this: Saor Eire and, later, the Republican Congress.

Despite resistance from IRA traditionalists, Republic-

electoral politics, and in the North on civil rights.

## Split

The issue of the Border and military activity very firmly took second place. As a result, when the Civil Rights movement threatened the Northern regime and the B Specials tried to unleash a pogrom in Belfast and Derry, the IRA was totally unprepared. The small number of guns they had were on loan to the Free Wales Army!

Coogan describes the situation: "... had the handful of IRA men not been present, Orange mobs, led by B Specials, would have burned the Falls Road to the ground, and, with it, every Catholic family which did not flee. But this circumstance, much as it may have rebounded to the credit of the individuals concerned, rebounded very badly indeed on the IRA's public image."

The Provisional IRA split shortly afterwards from the Officials. Though their political ideas at the time seemed to the right of the Officials and marked a return to a more traditional Republicanism, the Provisionals grew because they were willing and able to undertake the defence of the Catholics in the North.

Their function as defenders of the Catholic community against pogroms, the RUC and B Specials, has



areas of the cities and the poorer rural areas".

The IRA's role as a defender of the Catholic community goes back to the war of 1918-21, when the RUC and Protestant sectarians hoped to drive as many Catholics as possible out of their jobs and homes in Belfast to reinforce the Protestant character of the North East.

The IRA's roots in the Catholic community do not mean that Republicans see the Protestants as a whole as their enemies. Coogan describes a number of attempts by Republicans to draw Protestants to their side.

In 1932, Protestants and Catholics jointly rioted against the unemployment

Ulster Defence Association, searching for an agreed political solution.

All these attempts at unity have been short-lived, often because the Unionist rulers in the North, or more recently, the British, have consciously tried to break them up. A recent example is the assassination (probably by the UVF) of Protestant councillor John Turnly, a member of the middle class nationalist Irish Independence Party.

## Unfree

The best part of Tim Pat Coogan's book is his description of the last ten years

# IRA:

# Why the Phoenix rose again

women'...

In this new edition, Coogan has added a new section to cover the last ten years, and has drastically revised his conclusions. He states in a new preface: "The Northern state is fundamentally unstable: its majority population cannot and, where a large percentage of its population is concerned, will not govern the area in the sense that the word 'govern' is understood in Western democracies..."

"I cannot see how, in the present context, an organic development towards peace can be achieved while the British link is retained."

The history of the IRA Coogan has written in the early part of the book explains why this is the case. The history of the modern IRA begins just before the First World War with the foundation of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army.

Irish nationalists and socialists saw the 1914-18 war

It survived, as Coogan points out, simply by attracting those in each generation who wanted to do something about partition. Britain's economic domination of Ireland, and the compromises of successive Southern governments.

They usually became involved in military campaigns, such as the campaign against the stabilisation of the Free State in the '20s, the bombing campaign in Britain at the start of the Second World War, or the Border campaign of 1956-62.

The failure of such purely military campaigns led sectors of the Republican movement to seek alternatives:

an Congress were involved alongside the official IRA in fighting the clerical-fascist Blueshirt movement, and they were also involved in strikes, unemployed and tenants' movements. And the official IRA offered help to the Dublin transport workers in their strike in 1935.

The IRA also moved to the left in the 1960s following the failure of the 1956-62 campaign. Then — as with the Republican Congress — the move to the left involved close relations with the Communist Party and the CP's own brand of 'socialist politics'. The result was that the Republicans focussed on

distinguished the IRA in the North, and particularly in Belfast, from the IRA in the South and along the Border. It has given the Republicans deep roots in the local communities, which survives to this day, and allow the IRA to continue to operate despite Army and RUC repression.

Even the Army admitted to this in a document seized by the Provisionals in 1979.

## Defender

It described them as "essentially a working class organisation based in the ghetto

provisions of the government. The IRA issues an appeal to the Protestants commemorating the Battle of the Boyne: "... inevitably the small farmers and wage earners in the Six County area will make common cause with those of the rest of Ireland for the common good of the mass of the people". There followed a pledge of religious toleration for the Protestants.

In 1934, the Republican Congress organised a contingent of Protestants from the Shankill Road to march in the annual commemoration of Wolfe Tone, the founder of Republicanism, who was himself an Anglican.

In the 1940s, Denis Ireland, a Protestant, founded a constitutional group, the 'Irish Union Movement', which favoured Irish unity. Some of its members were also in the IRA.

Coogan also describes more recent contact between the Provisionals and the

(the earlier period is covered more deeply in Bowyer Bell's book 'The Secret Army'). He describes how the Provisionals grew as a result of British repression (such as the Falls Road curfew of 1970, when the Army systematically wrecked houses in the Falls Road in a search for arms) and a desire to end the Stormont regime which had for so long discriminated against the minority.

He writes of internment, that it "stimulated the Catholic population to extend a far greater degree of support to the IRA than existed at any time since the end of the Anglo-Irish war of 1916-21 and arguably even during it. This support, which probably peaked in 1972 when Stormont fell, suffered many rises and falls but never wholly disappeared". He describes how this support has enabled the Provisionals to survive despite the high level of military oppression they have had to face.

The history of the IRA, and especially of the last ten years, confirms Coogan's view that only when Britain withdraws totally from Ireland will there be any chance of a political understanding between Catholics and Protestants or of a socialist solution. Socialists in Britain must step up their fight for a British withdrawal, for without it "Ireland unfree will never be at peace".



# MESSAGE FROM LONG KESH

## Why we will go on hunger strike

AFTER four agonising years of suffering the torment and solitude of being 'on the blanket', and further enduring two horrifying years of what has become known as 'the dirt strike', the decision of the prisoners in H Block to engage on a hunger strike cannot come as any great surprise to the general public.

That decision was arrived at when the last glimmer of hope of some satisfactory agreement acceptable to the prisoners being reached between Cardinal O Fiaich and Humphrey Atkins died with the final rounds of discussions.

### STEEL

Despite public opinion, international pressure, and acute embarrassment to the British Government in the sphere of human rights, they have shown as much give as steel plate.

The five demands of the prisoners are indeed reasonable in any prison system in the world, never mind the Six Counties [of Northern Ireland] with all of its political violence and political problems.

People on the 'outside' who have never experienced the loss of their liberty should not be too hasty to pass judgment on the prisoners and their decided course of action. Often one cannot fully comprehend the depth of the brutality and the intensity of the deprivation that continues unabated. Also, throughout the media there is a grave distortion and confusing of the issues involved by the propagandists of the Northern Ireland Office.

To live in a nationalist area of the Six Counties means that at any moment you can be dragged from your home and friends, automatically lose your liberty, be forced to suffer degradation and brutal assaults which the prisons have reduced to a fine art, be labelled a 'criminal', a 'terrorist', a 'psychopath', etc, and processed through some form of prison life called 'normality' in the guise of the H-Blocks.

Finally it may also mean for you to fully know that this punishment and shame will continue until you 'break' or are released. Basically it is one enormous injustice and the hunger strike at the end of this 'conveyor-belt' is an agonised plea from the victims for justice.

Also because such an

extraordinary response has been provoked — men prepared to give their very life for redress — it would be unrealistic to say that the injustice is unreal or small. Rather it implies a terrible corruption within the judicial system, an arrogant disregard for human rights within the prison system, and lastly a cynical insensitivity within the general public, towards the suffering of their imprisoned brothers and sisters, to permit this oppression to be perpetuated in the name of justice.

### STARVE

Against such a background and in order to save life, it is necessary for the whole public to give their full support to the prisoners and to actively protest against the British Government's prison policy in the Six Counties. We must not be unmoved to action, remain silent or indifferent while prisoners slowly starve to death in Long Kesh.

Over the decade have the prisoners not suffered enough? Or are we to further witness more coffins come out of these English-run hell holes?

**PRO, Republican prisoners, Long Kesh.**

# The politics of political status

**MARIE MULHOLLAND** — vice-president of Sinn Fein Great Britain — spoke to Mandy Williams and Les Hearn



The British Army has been unable to defeat the republican movement, even with the most sophisticated techniques of mass surveillance; but the republicans have admitted that the IRA cannot win a purely military victory, either. What does Sinn Fein see as the way forward?

At the last Ard Fheis (National Conference), Gerry Adams said that we couldn't win a purely military campaign. In the early seventies, when the IRA campaign began in earnest, it was purely defensive and there was no political organisation. The military campaign was miles ahead of the political one. Now there's a rush of politicisation and education to try and catch up, so that we are as politicised as we are militarily equipped and capable.

The political status campaign is one of the main campaigns which has to be won politically — it can only be political. If you recognise the prisoners as

political prisoners, then you have to admit that there's a war, and the state has to look at its role, and the working class starts to question — Are we a colonialist country? The implications of the political status campaign are very direct.

The struggle is not simply for withdrawal of British troops, but setting up a new socialist republic. Withdrawal will mostly be won militarily, but when unification comes, that's a political matter, because of the resistance of the Southern government. Republicans in the South now are being arrested: people in Sinn Fein in Dublin, and on the National Smash H-Block Committee.

What is the attitude of Sinn Fein to developments such as Charter 80 and the Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland?

Support for things like Charter 80 is good as a start, spearheading that

debate in the union movement. It gives one a way in. I'm amazed how difficult it is to raise Troops Out in the union movement.

I've given a lot of thought to the angles of the political status campaign, and I've realised the difficulties of taking up the arguments in British politics. If it can be gained on a humanitarian basis, that's OK; if Charter 80's demands are met in full they do in reality grant political status. But they must be won in total. We can introduce the treatment of prisoners on a humanitarian level, but then make it a political debate.

Sinn Fein is taking observer status in Charter 80 and the Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland. We want to see what success the campaign has, and see if that is the way to introduce the liberation movement into the British working class. We can learn a lot from this.



### EDITORIAL

## Out of Nato!

BOTH RONALD Reagan and his deputy George Bush have declared that they think the USA could win a nuclear war. About 5% of Americans would survive, said Bush, to claim the victory.

Jimmy Carter, for his part, is ready to send US warships and planes into the Persian/Arab Gulf as soon as America's oil supplies are threatened. He has already risked setting off a war in the region with his attempt at a raid on Iran.

"Do not scoff at American power", was Carter's message to the world, according to his side-kick Zbigniew Brzezinski. The new Cruise missiles being stationed in Europe will make it much more likely that nuclear mass-murder will be used to assert "American power".

They are supposed to be much more accurate than other nuclear missiles. They are the ideal weapon for people who want 'limited' nuclear war — like General MacArthur, who during the Korean War wanted to drop nuclear bombs on China, or like the generals who were keen to 'nuke Hanoi' in the Vietnam war.

These nuclear bombs and the wars they may be used in 'defend' nothing but the power of the great capitalist profit-machines to plunder and exploit the whole world.

The Vietnamese never threatened American working people. Nor did the Koreans.

Britain's wars in Malaya, Greece, Cyprus, Aden, Kenya, Suez and Ireland were and are nothing to do with defending the British people.

And the new arms build-up is in no way defensive. The decision to install Cruise missiles was well under way before the USSR decided on its SS20s.

Imperialism and the USSR cannot be put on the same level. The bureaucrats of the USSR and similar states are as vicious and irresponsible as Carter and Thatcher, but they rest on a different economic system, a system that does not have the same exploitative and aggressive drive as imperialism.

If imperialism were able to conquer the USSR and restore capitalism there, that would be a defeat for the world working class.

The roots of the present war drive are in the economic crisis of capitalism. As the flow of profits falters, the millionaire ruling minority in the western countries becomes more ready to lash out and risk murdering millions and destroying civilisation for the sake of their plunder and power.

As long as Britain is in NATO, it is a major active force in that war drive.

We must get Britain out of NATO — and we must also start a struggle to destroy NATO. The workers throughout the world must disarm and overthrow the capitalist warmongers before their blind greed for profit kills us all.



Labour's  
Blackpool  
bomb  
decision

## Fight to make it stick!

FRANK ALLAUN MP spoke to Socialist Organiser about the fight to put Labour's conference decision for unilateral nuclear disarmament into practice.

We've got to hold that line. No going back. In 1960 there was a reaction led by the Campaign for Democratic Socialism and, I regret to say, Hugh Gaitskell, which succeeded in reversing the decision.

Make no mistake, whoever is appointed Leader of the Labour Party, there will be a similar campaign this time. Therefore it is absolutely essential that the big trade unions stick to their decision on unilateral disarmament.

I think we can hold the line. The movement is much bigger and much deeper than 20 years ago.

But we might as well start now, with resolutions to the top in the trade unions, to confirm the policy next October.

## Class War not Nuclear War

New Barricade pamphlet

15p plus 10p postage from PO Box 135, London N1.

## Labour & women's rights

A one-day conference organised jointly by Women's Fightback and Islington Central CLP women's section. November 22, Central Library, Holloway Rd, London N7. Registration £1 from Women's Fightback, 41 Ellington St, London N7.

ANTI-NUCLEAR CAMPAIGN CONFERENCE: Nov. 8th 10.00 to 5.00, Students' Union, Sheffield University, Glossop Rd, Sheffield. Cost: £2. Credentials from: Mike Ellis, 14 Coalbrook Grove, Woodhouse Mill, Sheffield S13 9XT.

## Land of slump and Tory

by DAVID BLACK

THE CONFERENCE of the people with a lot to conserve is now over for another year. Leaving aside the sparkling oratory and dynamism of the Mad Monk and Tarzan Heseltine's venture into poetry, there was little to get excited about.

The unions were attacked, Labour Councils were savaged, Cruise missiles brandished and Benn was dragged into everything; all the usual stuff.

The nearest conference got to dealing with these burning issues was when David Milburn, an upstart grassroot from Chester-Le-Street, attacked unemployment as the "unacceptable face of capitalism". That shook the gathering out of its torpor. Lacking a gallows, conference settled for the standard Labour fare of a slow handclap. But not before Milburn had attacked the Holy of Holies and demanded the sacking of Sir Keith Bovis.

Gradually, conference settled down... When the Thatchoid made her triumphal entrance — via the rear exit so as to avoid seeing the unemployed — delegates got what they'd been waiting for. She didn't disappoint them. Her speech was full of deep intellectual and philosophical meaning. We were treated to such gems as, "You turn if you want to, the lady's not for turning".

Delegates loved that, even if, like us, they couldn't make head or tail of it and showed their appreciation by singing "Land of Slump and Tory" for her before going home and living happily ever after.

I still can't work out why the Tories don't just have a postal conference. It would have saved Mr. Milburn from being on "the carpet".

On the subject of 'carpets', I hope the grassroot in a boiler suit is not standing on the one that the Vestey scandal has been swept under. The beano at Brighton appears to have snuffed out that unsavoury little business.

The Vestey's, you see, have gone in for a redistribution of wealth... mainly through offshore funds, family trusts and accountants in Uruguay. Tory chairman, Lord Thornycroft, approves of that sort of thing and, once he gave the Vestey's his blessing and wishes of good luck, the Press conveniently dropped the matter; even if last year the owners of Britain's biggest firms never paid any tax.

If there is life after Brighton, a lot of Tories will want to come back as Lord Vestey.

OUR FIRST day in Poland and showed us a little of what life is like there.

Queues for everything — meat, potatoes, sugar, coffee, toilet paper, even grapes and bananas. The shelves in the shops looked bare except for mountains of biscuits — and vodka.

In Gdansk everyone is with Solidarnosc, right from the platform sweep at Główni station to the director of the theatre — even the family who let their room to us, and the taxi driver who took us to the

by MARK HALL

Marski Hotel, the headquarters of the new movement.

The Hotel is still listed in the tourist guide — "a very special hotel", someone said. There used to be a tree in front of it, but it has been chopped down to allow surveillance from the other side of the square.

Outside, crowds of people gathered round photographs of bulletins mounted in the window. At the side entrance, there was a constant coming and going as workers arrived to join, collect bulletins, and ask questions.

**SOLIDARNOSĆ**

Once inside, we were rushed upstairs into Walesa's office for our first interview. Hero of the strikes and figurehead of the new union, Walesa seemed to be very keen to avoid answering questions about the future. In fact, he echoed a general impression of 'wait and see' that we gained from our visit.

He also reflected a fairly general chauvinist attitude when asked what he thought about women in politics. "Women are like pretty flowers, and I like pretty flowers. Politics are too hard for women".

We did learn about some of the problems of the present, though. Solidarnosc has been faced with attempts by the authorities to subvert and intimidate it. In Lodz, for example, police were inspecting the documents of everyone entering the union building. A telephone call from Gdansk soon stopped this, though.

**SOLIDARNOSĆ**

We were also told how police harassed delegations coming to the shipyard. The shipyard radios were tuned to police frequencies. One night they picked up a frantic message: "I'm on my own and I've got an accident and a delegation. What shall I do?" The reply came back, "Never mind the accident, get the delegation".

More generally, the main problems are in agriculture

Q: What problems have you experienced from the Government in setting up Solidarnosc?

A: The Government will not open the door of their own accord. We expected nothing from them.

Q: We understand that some of the official unions have been simply renaming themselves 'new unions' while maintaining their old structures.

A: There is no other alternative open to them. In

and building. The people are clearly being made to suffer for the economy being held to ransom by the Western banks. Everything exportable must be exported. Poland is the biggest producer of beet sugar, but there is a shortage there. You can't buy Polish produce like Krokus jam. And in Lublin, workers found meat in cans labelled paint heading for Russia.

**SOLIDARNOSĆ**

For the first time, the peasants are firmly with the workers in the towns, and are themselves organising in Solidarnosc.

There are still some people who think that the bureaucracy and the new unions can cooperate. They point to the changes in the government and the drive against corruption within the Party.

Certainly there have been shuffles going on within the government, and one or two people have been made scapegoats as a result of revelations of misuse of funds. But the 'new' faces are still apparatchiks — members of the ruling clique.

Nevertheless, most people are amazed that

the next stage the old unions must be destroyed. A man is first ill, then he dies.

Q: The one-hour strike [on 3 October] was a resounding success. Do you have any plans for further strikes? Why was the 20th October strike called off?

A: We have no plans for any more strikes. We have serious economic problems and strikes cannot heal the economy.

Q: What do you think of the

reforms announced within the Communist Party?

A: I am not a party member.

**SOLIDARNOSĆ**

Q: But these reforms have been provoked by the formation of Solidarnosc.

A: I don't care.

they were tipped off and afterwards slept in different parts of the shipyard.

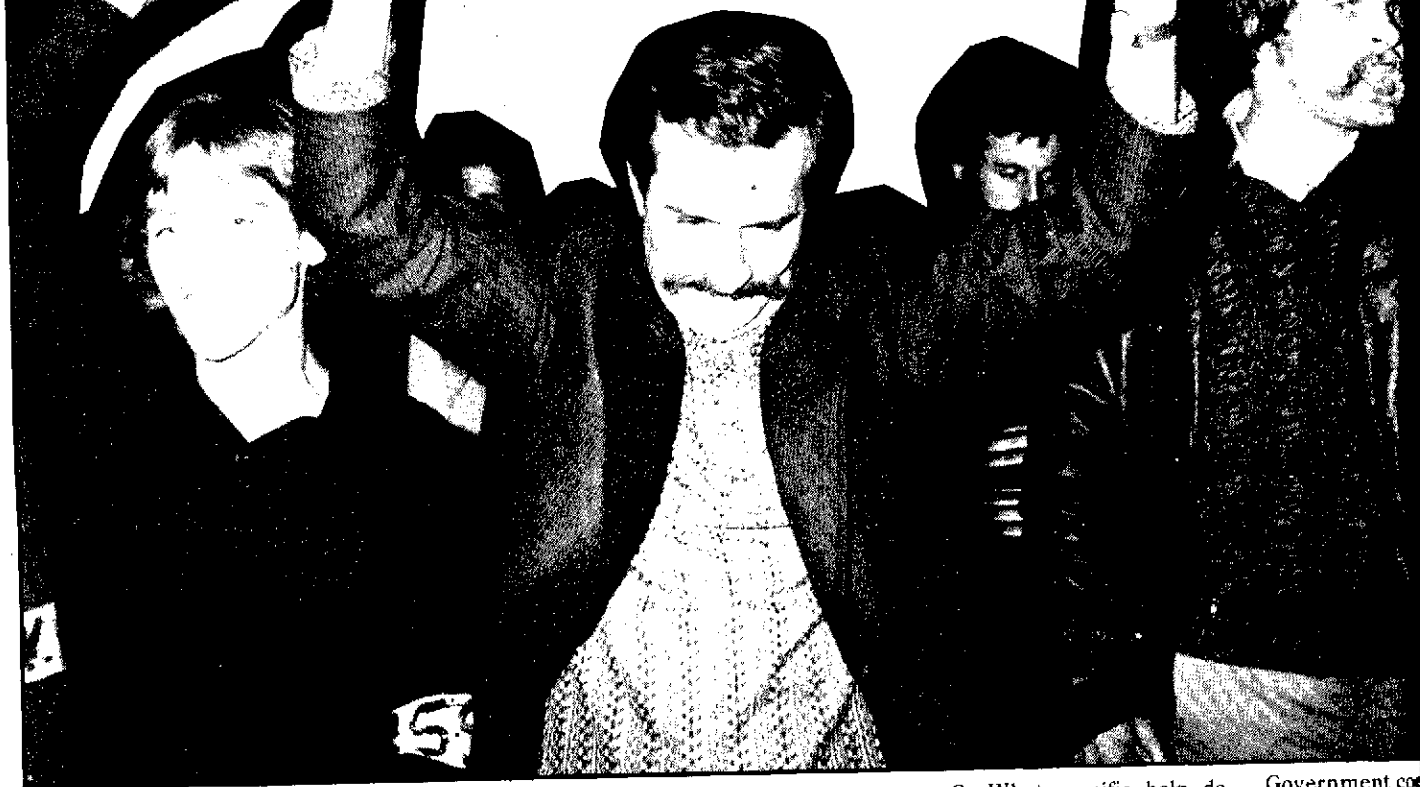
So, what of the future? The shortages continue and workers are now looking to the union to show some concrete gains, not just agreements for the future.

**SOLIDARNOSĆ**

In Britain, the press presents the movement as being anti-socialist and it draws the support of such reactionaries as Frank Chapple. Our friend Tadek, who helps with the underground paper in Warsaw, gave a good reply: "Please don't think that when we talk about socialism and communism we mean real socialism and communism. We mean the version practised in Poland."

"Socialism doesn't mean state control of industry, dependence on Russia, and strong centralisation so nobody can really decide — yet that is what is called socialism in Poland. It is not socialism because one small group has all the control. The problem for us is that because the press and media are so tightly controlled, we have been unable to develop an alternative programme".

Interview with Lech Walesa



Passers-by talk to workers occupying Gdansk shipyard

they have achieved so much without military intervention. "Every morning we look out of our windows and say 'Thank God, no tanks'", one man told us. The government did discuss plans to use troops within Poland, but the opponents of these plans — including, at the time, the new CP boss, Kania — succeeded in having them rejected. The admiral of the navy, for example, refused to bring his marines into contact with the workers.

There were also plans to kidnap the Gdansk shipyard strike committee at night. At first, the committee slept together in the negotiating hall. But



Inside the Gdynia shipyard occupation

# SOLIDARITY

## The strike is our only weapon

**JADWIGA PIATKOWSKA** is a woman worker in the Gdansk shipyard.

**Q:** What was the involvement of women in the organisation of the strike?

**A:** There were many women delegates from different factories and many women helping with food, typing, etc. There were also many single women and women working in the health service.

**Q:** What do you think about retiring women at 50?

**A:** I think I would be angry to be thought old at 50.

**Q:** We have seen numbers of women driving trains, buses, etc. What is the position of women in industry?

in especially difficult conditions.

**Q:** Do you think the demands relating to women will be met, and will women be better organised to push for further demands in the future?

**A:** There is a need for brave

the two years' maternity leave will operate, and that later in the year it will be longer.

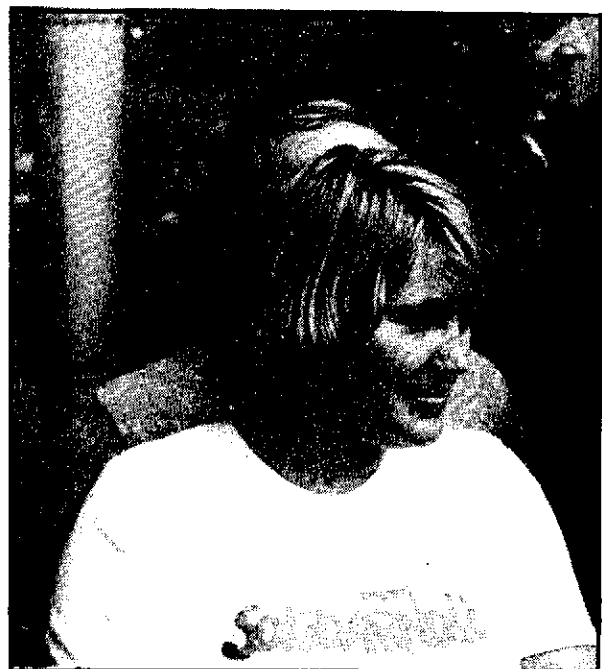
**Q:** How do you feel about the future?

**A:** I'm not now as enthusiastic and optimistic as I was during the strike. There is

for people with the right connections to arrange things like flats or avoidance of military service. To corrupt people is easy, to repair the damage takes longer and is much harder. Everyone is living in hope that things will improve.

One main thing is that the consciousness of workers is much higher and the wall between the Director and the workers is much lower.

**Q:** Do most women in the factory think like you do?



Jadwiga Piatkowska

women to fight for more. As I have only just got my job it is difficult for me. But other women in the shipyard have been told that they are better off than other women and to stop moaning or get the sack.

I hope that from January

no more in the shops now than there was before. I'm afraid that the Government is trying to tell workers, 'We've done a great deal, don't expect any more immediately'. But the basic problems still remain. It is still very easy, for example,

**A:** Yes. When I started work, I was asked by the woman representative of the official union which union I wanted to join. 'The new union, of course,' I said. She replied that she felt as if she was on strike with nothing to do.

**Q:** Walesa said to us that strikes solve nothing. What is your attitude?

**A:** The only effective weapon we have is still the strike. It used to be argued, 'It's still not long after the War, you must wait while we rebuild' — but that's wearing a bit thin now. The people who fight for the rights of all people usually have nothing for themselves.

## Fighting INSIDE the Party isn't enough



**PETER HAIN** replies to the debate on his pamphlet, 'Reviving the Labour Party', opened by Jon Lansman, Andrew Hornung, and Neil Turner

I AM grateful to *Socialist Organiser* for provoking a discussion on my pamphlet\* which was written with precisely that intention.

If there was a central theme to the pamphlet, it was that the Party ought to make a break with parliamentarianism and create a new synthesis between extra-parliamentary struggle and pressure inside the system. Both the purely parliamentary strategy of Labourism and the insurrectionary (now often equated with 'rank and file') strategy of the so-called revolutionary left have failed in Britain. This is partly because both have misconceived the role of the state, albeit from diametrically opposing standpoints.

### Strategy

What the Labour left ought now to be doing is using a parliamentary majority to encourage and legitimate socialist change, but only from the base of struggle outside. The importance of such a strategy is not only that it repairs the failings of the past (and the present), but that it provides above all a tangible basis for socialist transformation.

Far too much of the far left's approach to politics relies on rhetorical appeals to 'revolution' (seldom defined with any precision in a modern British context) which duck problems of practical intervention and avoid specifying how change might actually be brought about. There can be a kind of comfortable self-righteousness in labelling oneself a 'revolutionary' on the left — but meanwhile the real world marches by.

So, whilst I would accept that Andrew Hornung is right to focus on the problems of forging a unity between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action

— there are plenty and we need to debate them more fully — he doesn't really answer the argument. Of course there are dangers of another Chile. Of course the Labour leadership as presently appointed is bound to be absorbed by capitalism. But merely to call for a 'revolutionary' approach is not enough.

On the other hand, the left in the Party is both weak and fragmented, and we ought to learn from the experience of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, to see what basis for unity in action there might be in the future. I am not against the left organising in a serious way. But it seems to me that some sensitivity has to be shown for the context in which we have chosen to work — a rather conservative organisation reflecting a rather conservative working class. In that respect, Jon Lansman's ideas on dual tactics are interesting, suggesting a more sophisticated approach than has been true of the generally clumsy style of the Labour Left.

### Ward level

Neil Turner's emphasis on ward level activity is vital. When I first got seriously involved in my CLP and nationally in the Party, I was struck by the rather limited political experience of so many Party members. How many actually know how to write a press release in a way that will get coverage? How many know how to organise a campaign? These are not peripheral, nuts-and-bolts questions, for the whole style and tradition of Party activity is a passive one.

More autonomy ought to be given to branches, and more opportunities for ordinary members to gain the kind of invaluable experience of struggle and campaigning that continues to be the great strength of extra-parliamentary forces.

Finally, it will not be possible to revitalise the Labour Party without involving more people outside, including links with community groups, women's groups, workplace interventions and so on. Some on the left of the Party appear to take the view that the priority is to put our own house in order, establish full democratic accountability and form a 'disciplined organisation'.

They miss the point that struggles *inside* the Party are not enough — those struggles will only be finally won when we have strengthened our hand by mobilising new sources of working class power presently *outside*.

\* *Reviving the Labour Party*, 40p (including p&p) from the IWC, 45 Gamble Street, Nottingham NG7 4ET.



The workers attended mass — but they didn't stop their strike when the Cardinal told them to

TONY BENN drew an enormous amount of fire from the press with his speech on behalf of the NEC at the opening of the Blackpool Labour Party conference.

To read the hacks, and listen to the baying of the Press Lords, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Benn had delivered a paraphrase of the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels, or of its latter-day supplement, the 1938 Programme of Leon Trotsky.

You'd be wrong. Dead wrong.

Benn proposed three emergency measures to be enacted immediately the next Labour government takes office.

- The abolition of the House of Lords.

- A wide-ranging Industry Bill, to be put on the statute books 'within a matter of days'. This would give the next Labour government power (by decree) to extend public ownership, control capital movements, and 'provide for' 'industrial democracy'.

- Within a matter of weeks, a Bill would be enacted to return to the House of Commons the powers which it has surrendered to the Common Market in the last seven years.

## Lords

All this would be done constitutionally and according to the present rules.

There would be no ringing Roundhead declaration of the democratic right of the House of Commons, as an elected Parliament, simply to dismiss the Lords. 1000 new Lords would be created to get the 'consent' of the House of Lords.

The package amounts to no more than a limited strengthening of the House of Commons. It is limited indeed, because it would leave the monarchy in being, together with its quite substantial reserve powers. (For example, what if the monarch refused to create 1000 peers?)

In any major social conflicts, the formal powers of the monarchy would be a natural rallying point for the reactionaries.

The package also contains nothing about even curbing the power of the civil service or of the armed forces.

How radically does Benn conceive of the Industry Act being used? If a firm is unable to provide jobs when all around us the lives of millions of working class families and whole working class communities are being devastated, it would seem to be a pretty clear indication that private ownership in that industry should not continue. Yet at the Labour conference Tony Benn successfully opposed a proposal that any firms threatening redundancies should be nationalised under workers' control. The recent NEC rolling manifesto omitted Labour's policy for nationalising 25 big monopolies.

## Crisis

Tony Benn's programme is ridiculously inadequate as a socialist or working class response to the situation we face.

British society is rotting and decaying all around us, and the Tory government is now deliberately acting as a demolition squad.

It is not only that the Tories lack feeling for the British people, though they are sustained in their lack by a brutal opposition press,

by JOHN O'MAHONY

ousness towards the workers. More fundamentally, the desperate decline of Britain, fundamentally the decline of British industry's competitiveness and profitability, makes desperate measures necessary — and for the Tories desperate measures are measures that *make the workers pay*.

The repeated failures of different government strategies, Labour and Tory, prepared the way for demotion-squad Toryism. Just as mortally-ill people sometimes resort to the most outlandish quackery, the main party of British capitalism opts for the murderous quackery of monetarism because they believe that all the other options have closed for them.

Only one thing can fundamentally change the situation for British capitalism in the period ahead — the driving down of the working class share in the wealth we produce to a dramatic degree and at least a serious weakening of the trade unions. For example, it is because they hope that it will help them in these aims that the Tories are so ready to tolerate and increase unemployment and the massive destruction of the social fabric that accompanies it.

Labour in office prepared the way for Thatcher. Not just in the obvious sense that Healey and Callaghan introduced their own savage cuts in 1976 and '77, but by its thoroughgoing failure to regenerate industry and British society.

Put into office in the wave of industrial direct action that scuttled Heath, the government behaved as a straight-line capitalist government. It abused the confidence of the workers. Basing itself on the trade union bureaucracy (until 1978) at one side and the state machine on the other, it ruled in defiance of Labour Party conference decisions. It got wage 'restraint' and actually cut real wages for two years running.

## Labour

*But what the ruling class learned from that experience was the insufficiency of even a relatively successful [in their terms] Labour government.*

They needed to make the sort of attacks Labour could not make without shattering its base. Thus Thatcherism.

Against Thatcherism, the Labour Left now has a sort of consensus in favour of trying *another* policy for running capitalism — it will have a different driver, a state wheel added here, and a few control screws tightened or added there. But it will remain capitalist.

Import controls, state intervention perhaps to the level reached in wartime Britain, and the collaboration of the working class (read restraint; read incomes policy, perhaps cosmetised by some regulations on profit distribution) are supposed to ensure the regeneration of British industry and society.

This is nothing but edition 2 of the sum of delusions that dominated the

## The last Labour Government was a bosses' government

# We need a Workers' Government

1964-70 and 1974-9 Labour governments. In so far as they administered capitalism at all successfully, it was by attacking the working class; and they failed miserably to arrest the decline of British industry and society.

The time for patching is long past — and in any case it is in the working class interest not to patch but to transform and bring about fundamental change towards democratic working class socialism — that irreversible change in the balance of wealth and power that the 1974 manifesto tantalised talked about and Labour in power forgot all about.

We must replace the fundamental mechanism of capitalism — profit — with a new one: the needs of the working people, fulfilled in a society organised, owned collectively, and run democratically by the working class.

This demands that we plan our lives by planning and organising the economy on which we must build our lives, and this in turn demands the social ownership of the land and the major industries.

We need a radical working class alternative to capitalism.

## Power

Whether the next Labour government — in 1984, or earlier if we do as we have the industrial strength to do and kick out Thatcher — will be a more or less radical new instalment of the sort of Labour governments we have had this century, or not, will be determined by two things:

- By whether a real attack is made on the wealth and entrenched power of the ruling class; and,

- by whether or not it rests at least in part on the organisations of the working class instead of on those of the state bureaucracy, the military, and Parliament — that is, whether in response to the direct demands of the working class it can do what we want, or endorse what we do (taking over factories, for example) without being a captive of the state machine.

The working itself would not only serve and protect its own interests by organising itself outside the rhythms, norms, and constraints of Parliamentary politics, expanding its factory shop stewards' committees, combine committees, Trades Councils, etc., and creating new action committees, to be an industrial power that could as necessary dispense with the Parliamentarians.

The Brighton Blackpool decisions to control MPs and to give the majority of votes in the House to the prime

minister if Labour has a majority in Parliament to the CLPs and trade unions (if we are not cheated) could open the way to a new kind of 'Labour' government — a workers' government, instead of a government of the trade union party which merely administers capitalism according to capitalism's own laws.

Revolutionary Marxists believe that there must be a socialist revolution — a clean sweep of the capitalists and the establishment of the state power of the working class, leading to the setting-up of a workers' democracy. The big majority of the labour movement don't yet share our views. But we have a common need and determination to oppose and fight the Tory government and to oppose any moves, even by the Labour Party in government, to load the cost of capitalist decay and crisis onto the shoulders of the working class.

If we cannot agree on a root-and-branch transformation (or on precisely how to go about getting it), we can at least agree on a whole range of measures to protect ourselves and to cut down and control the capitalists.

To get the most out of the breakthrough for democracy at Brighton and Blackpool, we must fight to ensure that the next Labour government does act radically in our interests and does base itself on the movement, not on the bosses' state bureaucracy. And at the same time we must prepare and organise ourselves to be able to protect our own interests *however* it acts.

We must fight to commit the Party to radical socialist policies, and use reselection to make sure MPs are held to those policies.

But if the Labour Party really were to strike at the power and wealth of the bosses, they would strike back, using their army and state forces to repress the movement if necessary — or simply to cow the Labour government.

Whoever wants to break out of the limits defined by the interests of the capitalists must be prepared to disarm the ruling class and destroy its state. Only the working class can do that, organised in squads like those which the flying pickets organise, which can arm themselves when necessary.

Any Parliament-based government that attempted really radical change would put its head on the block, and while the present armed forces exist the axe is in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

Alarmist? An intrusion of insurrectionary politics that are out of place in Britain?

Unfortunately, no. In the last decade the Army has

become highly politicised through its work in Northern Ireland. Early this year the pacifist Pat Arrowsmith debated with Field Marshal Carver, chief of the British Army during the struggles that got Heath out in 1974.

"Fairly senior officers", said Carver, "were ill-advised enough to make suggestions that perhaps, if things got terribly bad, the army would have to do something about it..."

So it is either resign yourself to Thatcherism (or a new edition of Healey-Callaghan, or worse) — or fight on all fronts.

The power of the ruling class is not entirely, nor even essentially, in Parliament. That is the terrain to which they now go out from their redoubts in industry, the civil service and the armed forces, to meet and to parley with the labour movement, and to put on a show for the people.

But if the labour movement insists on new rules for the parleying game, they have a reserve language to resort to — force. So have we.

But the bosses' greatest real strength is that they have convinced the majority of the people that force is no part — not even a reserve part — of British politics. That was not the view of the officers in 1974.

## Army

The top brass told them then to shut up. But they won't always: some of the coup-talkers in 1974 are themselves now the top brass. In any case we should not rely on their restraint.

Thus we see that Labour's decisions on Party democracy and the new attitude to Parliament open the possibility of a new type of 'Labour' government. But only the possibility.

With the present political positions of the Party and the leaders of its Left, you would get a Labour government which would fundamentally be more of the same with radical trimmings. It would not serve the working class, and in present conditions it would not be able to adequately serve the ruling class. It would not even placate them.

*Neither the ruling class nor the working class can afford to muddle along indefinitely — or for much longer.*

If Thatcherism fails to regenerate Britain — and it will fail, because of its own vicious absurdities and because the working class must make it fail — that will only increase the desperation of the ruling class. There is no room left for reformist tinkering.

In the last decade and a half, the working class has

defeated successive attempts by Wilson and Heath to solve British capitalism's crisis and decay at our expense. We even drove Heath from office.

The tragedy is that, while strong enough industrially to stop their solutions, we have not been politically able to develop a thorough-going working-class socialist solution.

The result is the sort of stalemate that has often in history been the prelude to attempts at ruling-class 'solutions' through military coups or fascism.

One cannot foresee or predict how long the present stalemate will continue. It is certain only that — if all past experience has any bearing on what will happen in Britain — it cannot continue indefinitely. A solution to the decay and crisis must be found, and it will either be theirs, or ours — that is, working-class reconstruction of society on a socialist basis.

The drive to clinch the decisions on Labour democracy is the centre of the struggle now. Unless the Labour Party is thoroughly democratised, talking about it now as a vehicle for struggle and change is as absurd as calling for the Labour Party to come 'to power with socialist policies' was in the '60s and '70s. The Blackpool decisions must be consolidated, extended, and made to work. And no Labour democracy can be secure unless the trade unions are democratised. The rank and file militants in the unions must be organised.

But if we do not simultaneously organise a drive for the minimally necessary socialist policies, then the consequences of democratisation may well be very unlike what the left expects.

As Tony Benn said at Blackpool, a Labour Government will be tested by the banks, the IMF, etc., from the first hours. *If it does not go on the offensive in the working class interest, against the capitalists and their system, then it will have to go on the offensive against the left in the labour movement.*

Accountability can mean — as it does in European social-democratic parties — tight central control to keep the hands of the leaders free. If there had been accountability in 1975 when Jack Jones and the trade union bureaucracy collaborated with the government to set up the £6 pay limit, then there would have had to be a purge of the left (such as newspapers like the Sunday Express and Observer did try to launch).

With accountability, the leaders would not have the option of placidly ignoring the Party, as after 1975.

The Right and Centre, even backed by the big unions, would have difficulty carrying through such a purge. But the point to focus on now is that it is a serious possibility unless we step up the drive to arm the movement — or at least big sections of its rank and file — with socialist politics.

And not at the 'next stage'. If the labour movement is to be ready to offer a real socialist alternative at the 'next stage', its foundations must be laid and built upon *now*, and urgently.

That is what the Socialist Organiser groups exist to do, and what we are trying to do.

# Rochdale won't sell

THE TORY asset strippers are destroying the whole basis of the first Labour Housing Minister John Wheatley's hopes of bringing housing within the reach of working class people, at rents they can afford.

Wheatley established that central government would pay a proportion of the costs of building council houses, but would leave local authorities free to manage their own stock. This fundamental principle is now in jeopardy.

This is one of the reasons why the Labour group on Rochdale council is refusing to implement the 1980 Housing Bill. Other reasons for not implementing the Bill are that Rochdale has a 10,000 waiting list for council housing. Only the good stock would be sold, leaving people stranded in high-rise flats and in the Ashfield Valley flats, which are in a worse condition than the

by BARRY HASLAM, chairman, Rochdale District Labour Party

cil is refusing to implement the 1980 Housing Bill. Other reasons for not implementing the Bill are that Rochdale has a 10,000 waiting list for council housing. Only the good stock would be sold, leaving people stranded in high-rise flats and in the Ashfield Valley flats, which are in a worse condition than the

infamous Hulme flats in Manchester.

On Sunday 19th October, Rochdale Labour group met again to discuss their recent decision not to cooperate with Heseltine's new Bill. At this meeting, there was a long discussion on the implications of standing out against Heseltine alone. I am pleased to report that the group reaffirmed its previous decision.

But there was strong opposition from a few right-wing councillors. Therefore I am calling on all members of the Labour Party and trade unions, and any other organisation which supports the Rochdale council's stand, to send messages of support to myself at: 136 Malvern St. West, Rochdale, and to Les Worsley, Secretary of the Labour group, 150 Kirkway, Middleton, Manchester.

There will be a lobby of Rochdale council on 17th November in support of Labour's stand.

It's law now. Council houses must be put up for sale.

The new Tory law will lead to the best council houses being sold off.

House-building and maintenance is being cut back dramatically. So increasingly the domain of housing provided according to need will be confined to run-down estates and crumbling blocks of flats.

Anyone who wants anything better will have to take their chance on the market.

The whole labour movement opposes council house sales — on paper.

But nearly all Labour councils have failed the test of defying the Tory law in action. Only Rochdale has made a stand.

Labour activists must now fight for other councils to rally round Rochdale.

In the meantime, the brunt of the struggle is being borne by NALGO town hall workers, who in some areas are blacking work on council house sales.

They need the support of NALGO and other town hall unions at national level — up to and including strike action to defend them if they are victimised.

## ... and NALGO will resist

### Lambeth

A MASS meeting of Lambeth NALGO housing members has voted to defy both Lambeth Council and the Government by not implementing council house sales.

Branch secretary Mike Waller said, "If there is any disciplinary action, our members will simply walk out".

National support from NALGO is being sought, firstly on the grounds that council house sales amount to a cut in services, secondly that no member was originally employed to do this work and they should refuse to do the extra work. (The council is not employing any extra

staff to implement the Act).

The Act allows the Department of the Environment to sell houses directly (and take the money), and also to surcharge by an equivalent amount whoever takes the buck for refusing to implement the sales. The Council has passed the buck to the Chief Executive, who has passed it to the Director of Housing.

It is not clear which NALGO members will be at risk, but it is probably that they won't be protected by the legal immunities for trade disputes.

Motions of support should be sent urgently to Lambeth NALGO, and to the November 1st conference organising committee, both c/o Lambeth Town Hall, London SW2.

### Sheffield

ON TUESDAY 14th, Sheffield District Labour Party voted by 84 to 39 to sell council houses. This decision was ratified by the Labour group the following night.

Several councillors did argue for not selling. Councillor Dave Morgan argued that it was the council's duty to give a lead by making a standing. Cllr Mike Bower pointed out that NALGO and UCATT were prepared to support the council, and that other unions would follow if the Council took a clear stand.

NALGO has instructed its members not to do any work in connection with council house sales. The instruction arises from a dispute about

appointing extra staff to carry out the extra work involved, but NALGO is opposed to council house sales anyway. Their policy has the council's support.

The Labour group has tried to put its own advertisements opposing council house sales on Yorkshire TV. When this failed, it threatened to take the Tory government to court over this.

And its strategy now is to delay implementing the Act for as long as possible. Councillors argue that they will sell fewer council houses this way than if they refuse to implement the Act and commissioners are brought in.

But this is an illusion. If the council does delay selling council houses enough to make a difference, the Tories will call in commissioners anyway. Only determined action, not legalistic wriggling, will beat the Tories.

### Newcastle

NEWCASTLE NALGO is refusing to do work on council house sales.

The council wanted to fill five new jobs processing the sales by cutting five jobs elsewhere. NALGO's action at present is in protest at this move, rather than ex-

PLICITLY against the whole principle of council house sales.

But NALGO branch publicity officer Lesley Askew told Socialist Organiser: "When we've gone through the consultation on the five jobs, then we'll see".

## Stop the sales — and stop them now

Lambeth Labour councillor BILL BOWRING reviews 'The Great Sales Robbery' (published by SCAT — Services to Community Action and Tenants — 40p from 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1).

THIS PAMPHLET has many strengths from the point of view of a Socialist Organiser reader. It sees expansion and improvement of council housing as essential.

The record of the last Labour Government in condoning the sale of council houses for reasons of electoral popularity is mercilessly exposed. And stress is laid on the need to develop policies not only for fighting sales, but also for improving the housing system as a whole.

Unfortunately the pamphlet is at its weakest in the sections on resisting sales. It correctly points out that the official Labour Party policy is to follow the 'law of the land' and then 'to do anything possible to frustrate sales'. This, in effect, means selling. Many local Labour Parties are, however, prepared to go well beyond this. But how? And how far?

According to the pamphlet, there should be three 'aims of action'. First, ensuring that sales are and remain a political issue. Second, to sell as few houses as possible by minimising demand through persuasion and propaganda — and delaying and frustrating the process of sales.

And third, to build towards a complete stoppage of sales where this can be organised and supported.

The problem with this scheme has been clearly demonstrated in Lambeth. Here, the council leadership argued that fighting the sales was not a principled issue; that defiance of the Tory Act would mean even faster sales (through Heseltine's default powers) and surcharges and disqualification for the Labour councillors; and that slow implementation was the only tactical possibility, leaving the councillors to fight another day, on better terrain.

NALGO immediately demonstrated the bankruptcy of this policy by taking industrial action to prevent sales. Not only does their action lay council staff open to the risks of surcharge; it means that Labour councillors will have to uphold the disciplining of housing officers for refusing to implement the Labour Council's policy — of sales!

Where SCAT have got it wrong is that there is no such thing as building towards a complete stoppage. The only way the Tories

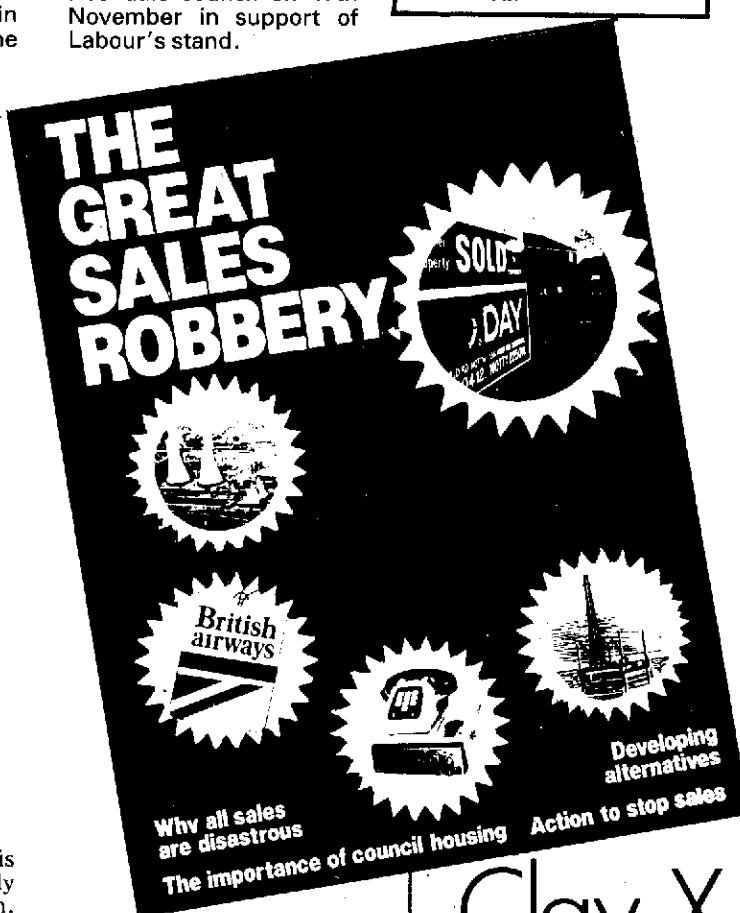
can be fought is by outright refusal by as many local authorities as possible. That way Heseltine's attempts to force sales would be made difficult, if not impossible.

Had Lambeth given a clear lead, then others might have followed. As it is, every right-wing council leader has been given an alibi.

The issue is not just one of sale of council houses being a matter of principle: on this, the SCAT arguments are irrefutable. The problem is Labour's traditional Fabian policy of working through the system and abiding by the letter of the law.

In the present crisis of the system, this is no way to fight the Tories.

Labour Councillors, trade union leaders, and community groups are required who will take the risks and face the consequences of breaking the law.



## Clay X CLP says 'resign'

Former Clay X Councillor David Nuttall told SO: "If they're allowed to get away with this, who knows what they'll do on the cuts." NE Derbyshire Council, covering the Clay X area, is refusing to cut jobs and services — but it will sell council houses.

"Their action makes a mockery of the selection process and of local accountability", said Nuttall.

"They should resign."

But at the group meeting on 8th October, the councillors' vote was 18 to 7 in favour of abiding by the Tory Housing Act and selling off council houses.

NE Derbyshire constituency Labour Party, which at its GMC on 5th October, called on its councillors not to implement the Act.

The GMC instructed its councillors to resign if they

were not prepared to abide by constituency policy and the pledges made during their selection.

Whether the GMC is able to enforce its decisions, considering the councillors' arrogant defiance of GMC policy, remains to be seen. Many of the GMC members who took part in Clay X's fight against the Tories' 1972 Housing Act are certain not to let the matter rest.

## BRENT Doing Heseltine's work 'with regret'

by NEIL NERVA

THE DECISION of Brent council to go ahead and sell council houses bodes very ill for its decision on cuts to be made early next year. It also shows how the fightback against the Tories has to go a long way before it can effectively counter the government.

Brent Labour Party Local Government Committee voted by 30 to 10 to urge its Labour group to oppose the 1980 Housing Act on council house sales. This view was also shared by the majority of the Labour councillors who sit on the Housing Committee.

The leadership of the Labour group, pleading for caution, convinced the Labour group by 18 to 11 to 'regretfully' accept the sale of council houses.

When John Lebor, leader

of Brent Council, came to the Party to discuss sales, he talked about running parallel to sales a campaign against the Government's housing policy. While the former is Brent Council policy, very little has been heard of the latter.

To their credit, 13 members of the group, in the face of a whip for slow implementation of the Act, put and voted for a motion at the last meeting of Brent Council stating that it was not the job of Brent Council to sell council houses, and that it should let Heseltine do so if he wished, instead.

The Party waits with interest to see whether these councillors, including the chair and deputy chairperson of housing, will be

disciplined. Meanwhile, the meeting on council house sales organised by the London Labour Party on 12th October showed how difficult it is for a council to carry out the Act's provisions and yet at the same time publicly oppose it. Heseltine has the right to send in commissioners to any local authority which he feels is hindering 'the tenants' right to buy'.

Had this conference been held two months earlier, before local Labour Party and Labour groups made their decisions, it could have been used to launch a London-wide campaign against council house sales. Such a campaign would not have been on paper, but instead would have meant Labour Councils really opposing and stopping the sale of council houses.



# Scotland gets the Tory surgeon's knife

**THE TORY cuts in the health service are now biting in Scotland. In Glasgow, over 500 health service jobs have gone this year, two hospitals have been closed, and the Health Board plans to close another eight hospitals.**

**The number of acute hospital beds is to be cut by 40% over the next ten years.**

The Argyll and Clyde Health Board say their allocation from the government is at least £6 million short of the figure required to cover last year's level of service, and that 'some services cannot continue at normal levels and there will have to be some redundancies'.

In Lothian, Scotland's second largest health board, documents have

by Mike Brown, George Paton, and Dougie Seath

been leaked to the health service trade unions showing that the board intends to make cuts amounting to over £10 million.

New facilities like the new Royal Infirmary block in Edinburgh will be left unused — to save running costs. The Health Board has sacked temporary staff and frozen all vacancies.

Using figures from the document NUPE has calculated that over 2,000 jobs will go this year. In the first 7 weeks of the freeze, nearly 1000 posts were reviewed by health district officials and of these, 460 were frozen, including 168 ancillary and 170 nursing jobs. £4 million worth of development programmes have been sent back to the filing cabinet.

These cuts are just the beginning. The health board documents stated: "Large savings may only be made by reducing the level of service, by closing wards and even hospitals". However, "the time taken to consult with all the vari-

ous bodies regarding changes in services preclude this..... in the short term." That means that this year's cuts are simply preparing the way for the wholesale closures to come next year after 'consultation'.

SO supporters who are health workers in Lothian suggest what must be done to fight these cuts: 'The health service unions must make sure that the unfilled vacancies are blacked and that nurses do not do the work of ancillary and clerical workers and vice versa.

'In Lothian there has been a campaign committee set up by the NHS unions to work out action and coordinate the fight against the cuts, but we feel this should be broadened to include delegates from each workplace and not just from the branch executives. Joint shop stewards' committees should be set up in each hospital to build a strong union organisation capable

of breaking down the divisions between nurses, ancillaries and admin and clerical staff. These Joint SSCs should issue workplace bulletins giving full information on which sections are being cut and how to fight the management's threats.

'But health cuts affect all workers. We must argue in all our unions for solidarity and support for health workers and argue that the only way we'll be able to stop these cuts is through industrial action. Support can be won from other unions, as was shown by the lobby of the Lothian Health Board on Sept. 11th, attended by over 1000 trade unionists, including members of the NUM, FBU, NALGO and local councillors.

Labour Party branches must play a part in the local campaigns too. They should organise public meetings jointly with NHS shop stewards to take place inside the hospitals perhaps during visiting hours.'

TO DATE there are 244 organisations supporting the conference and sending delegates. This figure includes 20 Labour groups, 20 NALGO branches (including Lambeth and Lothian region), 17 Trades Councils, 11 UCATT branches, 10 Shop Stewards' Committees, 17 NUPE branches and 33 CLPs. But as Brian Martin, one of the organisers of the conference told SO, the registrations are pouring in daily, so that by the time you read this the figure will be much higher. Delegations are coming from all over the country and especially from areas hardest hit by the cuts like Scotland and Yorkshire.

To be a success this conference must aim to get commitments from the trade union movement to

Nov. 1 anti-cuts conference

## STRIKES CAN STOP THE CUTS

take industrial action to stop the cuts.

Camden Town Hall has room for 1000 people — at the rate delegations are coming in, there will be standing room only.

Date: Saturday 1st November;  
Time: 10.30-4.30;  
Place: Camden Town Hall;

There will be a creche and the organisers are negotiating with Camden council to provide facilities.

Delegates: 3 per controlling Labour group, 1 per minority Labour group, TU branch, Shop Stewards' Committee, CLP or Trades Council.

FEE: £1 (Cheques/POs payable to "Lambeth Joint Conference").

Write to: Organising Committee, Room 103, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2.



Lambeth's anti-cuts demo last November. Photo: Nik Barstow

## These cuts will hit 2 million

Next month the Tories new Social Security Acts will come into force. Their passage through Parliament has generally been ignored in the labour and trade union movement, yet their effects will be devastating. Gerry Melling, a NALGO member from Glasgow Socialist Organiser group, explains.

WHEN THE Social Security Acts come into force on 24th November, over two million people will lose money immediately:

■ School leavers will not be able to claim any benefit whatsoever for 3 months after they leave school.

■ Anyone with over £2,000 (for example, redundancy pay, compensation for thalidomide victims etc) will be unable to claim supplementary benefit.

■ Earnings Related Supplement will be reduced in January and abolished in 1982. This represents a cut of £16 a week for an average unemployed worker.

### Tax

■ Strikers will still be unable to claim any benefit, even in cases of destitution; families' benefits will be reduced by £12 and the £4 disregard on strikers' tax rebate will also be abolished.

■ National Insurance rates for children will be cut by 10%.

■ Grants for clothing and footwear will become almost impossible to obtain and many other discretionary

weekly additions will be slashed. Claimants for unemployment, sickness or widows' benefits will be unable to obtain any help in an emergency.

Another disguised cut is that these Acts mean that benefits will no longer be updated yearly. Previously there was a statutory obligation to up-rate all pensions yearly in line with prices or wages, whichever was higher. Now pensions will only be increased in line with prices. This means that claimants will never be able to share in any increase in the standard of living.

The Tories claim that inflation is only running at 16.5%. In fact it is nearer 20%. So they are only increasing pensions by this artificial rate: 16.5%. But short-term benefits and invalidity benefits are only being increased by 11.5%. This means a cut of 5% even by the Tories artificial inflation figures.

It is a fact that the poor spend the bulk of their incomes on rent, fuel, food and transport, all of which are increasing in price well in excess of general inflation.

In Strathclyde, these cuts represent a loss of £100 million to claimants by 1982.

Needless to say, the new Social Security system will still be operated in secret. The Tories 'A' code will still exist and will be joined by a new secret 'S' code.

Following close on the heels of these measures will come new legislation which will tax all benefits in 1982. The Tories have published a Green Paper which aims to cut all sickness benefit for the first 8 weeks of sickness and will put the onus on the employers to pay a flat rate of £30 sick pay. Apart from the fact that employers will simply be able to sack with impunity any sick person, this flat rate of £30 represents a loss of £7.07 a week to the average family with 3 children.

### Jobs

The Tories have also released a discussion document which outlines a strategy for dismantling the industrial injuries scheme where they clearly admit their twin goals of crippling claimants and cutting jobs in the DHSS.

So it is essential that these measures are discussed in the labour and trade union movement and that we organise now on the basis of opposition to all cuts in social security. Links must be formed between the DHSS unions and claimants organisations to discuss effective action. Trade unions must have unemployed branches and we must demand the introduction of a non-means-tested guaranteed minimum income equivalent to the average industrial wage for all unemployed. The unemployed must not be made to pay doubly for the bosses' crisis.

## London's Manifesto

ON October 17-18th over 400 delegates met to decide on the Manifesto for Labour in next year's Greater London Council elections. This was the first time that a manifesto has been democratically decided by the entire labour movement in London or elsewhere. As Greater London Labour Party Chairman Arthur Latham said, "We have shown that it is now necessary for a small group, whoever they may be, to meet just before an election to draw up the final manifesto." He hoped that the Party nationally would follow London's lead.

The manifesto decisions include:

- an immediate cut in fares on London Transport of 25% followed by a freeze and moves to introduce free fares; no redundancies to occur as a result;
- an end to office development in Central London;
- increased spending on housing and employment;
- getting some degree of accountability over the Metropolitan Police;
- a demand that the banks be nationalised and all interest charges cancelled.

An amendment was accepted which called for a no cuts policy, for a campaign by the GLC against the government and for a call for industrial action to support such a stand.

But as Lambeth council leader Ted Knight commented in a fringe meeting, the conference did not get down to the details of how

to campaign against the Tories and win.

The amendment was passed 'on the nod' which leaves it to London Labour movement activists to ensure that both GLC candidates and the trade unions carry out their commitment to back their support for the Manifesto with action when the time comes.

We should also press for the democracy begun at this conference to be extended so that the GLC leader is elected by the Regional Conference and to ensure that the new GLC gets the backing it needs to be able to carry its programme through.

## A fair trial for Sa'adati

MOHAMMAD Reza Sa'adati, a 36 year old leading member of the leftist Muslim Mujahedeen Khalq, has been under arrest in Iran since April of last year.

While the war with Iraq has increased the number of reactionaries released from prison — SAVAK torturers, army butchers of the masses, and sundry spies and agents — militants like Sa'adati are kept in jail.

Sa'adati was actually arrested by an illegal group — not one of Tehran's fourteen "revolutionary committees" — which has since been accused of being linked with the American Embassy. The charge against him was that he was a Russian agent.

Save yourself a quid fifty

NICE COP gets job as under cover agent to hunt out a homosexual murderer in New York's gay world; that is, in the heavy leather/sado-masochism part of New York's gay world. The ensuing film is an excuse for a lot of blood and gore, with a good reactionary message thrown in.

You might think, until the last few scenes, that "cruising", in its own pathetic way is trying to say something vaguely progressive about gay people: the police are bastards (except the hero) who beat them up and arrest them; undercover cop, Al Pacino, starts to feel homosexual tendencies himself but tries to repress them. You might even think the film, despite being directed by a demented moron, is arguing that we are all gay really, but repress it.

Of course the message would still be a bit lost in the graphic murder scenes and the implicit idea that it's so nasty of our society to drive people into this dreadful decadent lifestyle. The re would still remain the impression that the gay world is thoroughly distasteful and violent.

But all is revealed in the closing sequences. No, there is no half-hearted and confused progressive moral buried deep in the heaving flesh and spouting arteries. Homosexuality, we discover, is a violent infectious disease. The cop, infected, turns maniac and cuts up his gay innocent next-door neighbour, (whom — gasp! — he may have been attracted to and whom he needs to kill to expiate his guilt.)

People who wear leather and are into sado-masochism (and all other nasty perversions too terrible to go into, but watch where you wear your handkerchief), are all, we discover, latent murderers. Homosexuality is nasty and decadent, and if you don't steer well clear you too could end up slitting someone with a kitchen knife.

Save yourself a quid fifty and stick your fingers down your throat.

CLIVE BRADLEY

The 'proof' of this charge is that he met two Russian journalists. For this 'crime' he has been held without trial for nearly a year and a half, tortured and denied basic rights.

Much of this time he has been in Evin prison where he spent several years under the Shah's thugs.

Sa'adati's lawyer has only been allowed to see him once and has not been given access to the file of evidence.

So far a long hunger strike by Sa'adati, pressure by the Mujahedeen and letters from trade union, civil rights and labour movement figures have not managed to wring from the regime a guarantee for a fair and open trial.

ANDREW HORNUNG

# BL's 6pc: An insult, not an offer

THE cupboard is bare, so we're offering you nothing. That, in effect is Leyland's answer to the workers' latest wage claim.

The Oct. 7 bulletin said: "The company have now replied to our £17 wage claim. Their offer works out at around 6.2% — and they have the nerve to suggest that they're being generous to make any offer at all this year!!"

In their statement to union negotiators, the company complained that we had not taken into account parity payments and incentive bonus money that BL have been paying out. Perhaps someone should remind the bosses that 'parity' was self-financing and as for the bonus..... that's been worth absolutely nothing since last November when it was agreed they've paid out

less than £5 in total.

So once more the company want us to accept a real wage cut (with present levels of inflation it means a cut of over 10%). And they're also threatening to refuse back-pay if we don't accept their offer by November 1st.

Our answer must be simple: we can't afford to accept this 'offer'. If the company hasn't moved by the end of this month, we need a total strike across BL cars.

But the union side of the Leyland Cars Joint Negotiating Committee didn't simply reject the offer, though several on the LCJNC wanted to, particu-

WITH THE launch of the new Mini Metro, Michael Edwards and the BL management think they are back in business again.

But the brave new era will be pretty much like the bad old days for BL workers. Edwards has made an 'offer' of 6.2% (now raised to 6.8%) for this year's pay rise — in fact, a cut of 10% in real wages.

The Metro launch puts BL workers in a stronger position to win a decent pay rise. But the official union leaders draw the opposite conclusion: they'll do anything to get a better wage offer — except disrupt Metro production!

Socialist Organiser traces the story as reported in the fortnightly SO bulletin at BL Longbridge.

larly the Cowley delegation. They took it back to Cowley, where a mass meeting rejected the offer.

The majority position on the LCJNC was that they didn't accept the offer but they wanted 3 weeks to think about it. We don't know what they are going to think about. But Grenville Hawley gave a press conference afterwards saying, "There might be something worth looking

at", meaning the improved bonus.

So as we say in the SO bulletin this week "instead of failing to earn £15 (which is what we're supposed to get) we can now fail to earn £22 a week!"

The LCJNC met again last Friday (17th) and the company announced they'd improved the offer by 0.6% to 6.8% which works out at 60p before deductions.

The SO bulletin this week says "6.2% was an insult — now they've decided to improve by 0.6% or 60p. BL's final offer is still an insult. It's still around a 10% wage cut in real terms. Even the gutless wonders on the LCJNC had no hesitation in rejecting it out of hand.

"Meetings are now being held in all the plants to reject the offer and to endorse our very modest claim of £17. Cowley and Rover works have already thrown the offer out by an overwhelming majority at mass meetings.

"Now we must do the same — and tell the company that come November 1st either they pay up or we walk out.

"The bosses are playing their favourite old tape recording again. 'We've

got no more money, the cupboard is bare and please don't go on strike because then we'll have to close down.' After 5 years of this kind of blackmail, most of us are thoroughly sick of the Company's tired old 'viability' argument.

"After all, they were able to find £35 million in the first six months of 1980 just to close plants and make thousands of workers redundant.

Every year they lay out £70 million in interest payments to the banks. They could knock up to £500 off the price of the cars under 'Superdeal '80'... but they still say that they 'can't afford' to pay us a living wage.

"It's about time we told the Company we can't afford another pay cut."

## Axe in the office

BL bosses are out to chop 2,400 white collar jobs. So far they have got 900 voluntary redundancies — so they want to sack 3,300.

The white collar unions have imposed an overtime ban throughout BL in response. Socialist Organiser's BL Longbridge bulletin called for support.

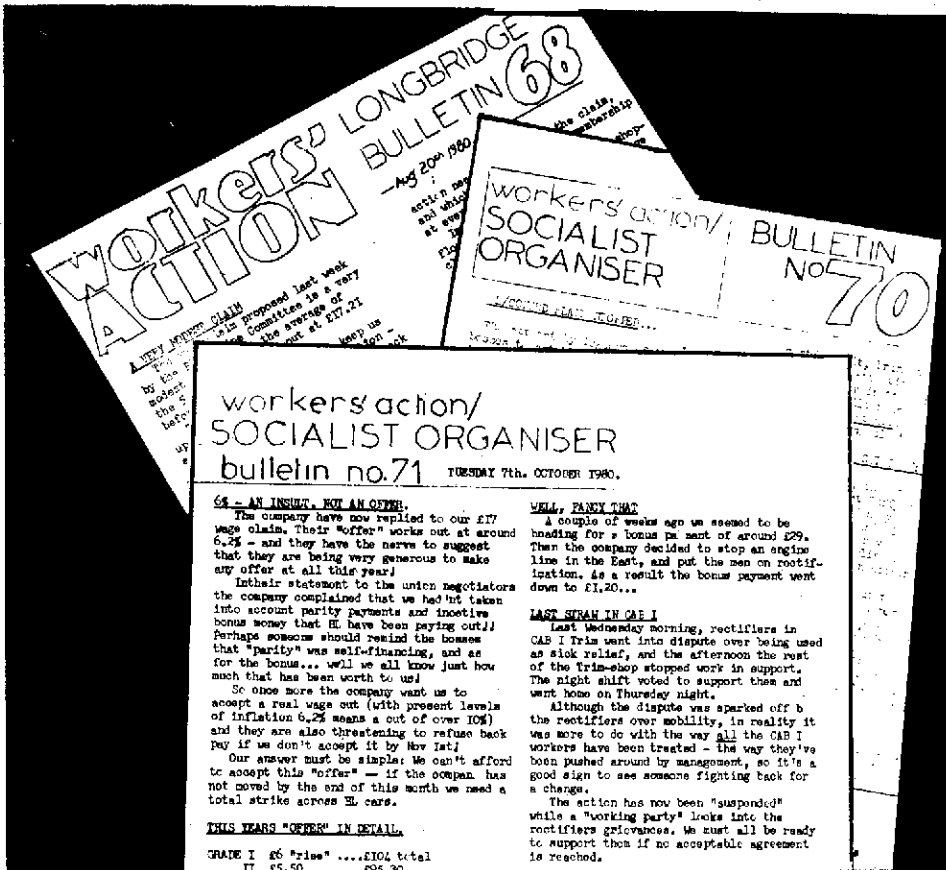
"THANKS VERY much for spending all your time in the factory instead of with your families. Thanks very much, and goodbye". That's how one APEX member described the company's decision to sack 4,200 staff workers. And it also explains why the staff voted overwhelmingly to ban overtime.

We know that there is not

much love for the staff on the shop floor. We know that white collar workers have walked across our picket lines in the past. We know that most foremen are in with the bosses against us most of the time.

But at the end of the day these people are trade unionists (and TASS, unlike APEX, has a good record of solidarity with the hourly-paid workers). And they are fighting redundancies.

We must support them. In particular no overtime should be worked by anyone — remember you are not covered by company's insurance if you have an accident while working without supervision.



For nearly three years now, the Socialist Organiser (formerly Workers' Action) bulletin in Longbridge has appeared fortnightly, informing, agitating, and arguing the political issues.

One side of the bulletin gives news and comment on Longbridge; the other presents a socialist viewpoint on national and international politics.

It is the only regular workers' information bulletin in the giant Longbridge complex.

## Solidarity beats hospital sacking

by GEOFF WILLIAMS

1,000 ANCILLARY staff, members of the TGWU and NUPE, walked out last week at the Heath Hospital in Cardiff. We were protesting at the sacking of a shop steward.

After two days of negotiating, we won reinstatement, with the condition that a further hearing would take place on the supposed reason for the sacking — breach of standing financial instructions. The management also agreed to an inquiry into the security department.

The steward has also been moved to another department. But it is clear that the response from the members has shaken management. They will tread very carefully before trying it on again.

The support from workers in other hospitals was great. Busworkers said they would not cross the picket lines to bring in other staff. It was the sort of solidarity that can defeat management every time, and can encourage workers

not to sit back and wait but to take action against attacks on their organisations and work conditions.

It was not the first time that disciplinary action had been taken against workers after charges brought by security officers snooping on them. In another case a final written warning was issued to a gardener after security officers followed him round.

But no dishonesty was even alleged when the shop steward was sacked. The ancillary staff walked out and the incoming shift and the night shift refused to clock on (although some unpaid members ensured patients' meals were seen to).

The CoHSE full time official made an immediate statement dissociating CoHSE from the strike. But when a CoHSE steward and another member came in to work overtime to cover for the strike, the T&G and NUPE members threatened to pull out the emergency cover. Management soon put a stop to CoHSE's antics, and quickly conceded reinstatement.

STRIKERS AT the Ayrshire Marine oil platform yard at Hunterston have been blackmailed into voting to go back to work.

On Monday 20th Boilermakers' members at the yard voted 144-105 to go back. James Murray, the Boilermakers' general secretary designate, had told them that if they did not accept, they would get no dispute benefit.

The other union at the yard, the GMWU, has already agreed to go back.

## SELL-OUT AT HUNTERSTON

The terms on which the union officials have forced the strikers back include the sacking of 300 or 400 out of the 900 workers at the yard. And the bosses will pick and choose who they take back.

Unless the workers accepted their demands —

which also included bringing in sub-contractors — the bosses would close the whole yard down, they said.

As a strikers' leaflet said, "the purpose is twofold. First, the destruction of permanent jobs by employing sub-contractors

whenever they choose. Secondly, as a means of weakening the union by sacking the shop stewards.

"This management wants robots as workers — robots who will meekly accept any conditions they impose. This is something that we cannot accept".

The bosses did not find robots — but they did find union officials who would 'meekly accept' anything as soon as a threat of closure was made.

JOHN WILDE

## WHERE WE STAND

- ★ Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks!
- ★ No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket line; no state interference in our unions!
- ★ No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions!
- ★ Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. The same should go for state benefits, grants and pensions.
- ★ Start improving the social services rather than cutting them. Stop cutting jobs in the public sector.
- ★ End unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs — share the work with no loss of pay. Start now with a 35 hour week and an end to overtime.
- ★ All firms threatening closure should be nationalised under workers' control.
- ★ Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.
- ★ Freeze rent and rates.
- ★ Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem; racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets.
- ★ Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence.
- ★ The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, M15 etc.), public accountability etc.

★ Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's equal right to work, and full equality for women.

★ Against attacks on gays by the State; abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and affirm their stance publicly.

★ The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.

★ The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.

★ It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each parliament, and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.

★ The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control.

The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist system in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the bankers and bosses.

Socialist Organiser aims to help build a class-struggle left wing in the trade unions and Labour Party, based on a revolutionary socialist programme. Socialist Organiser supporters' groups are being organised in many towns and cities.

Socialist Organiser is sponsored by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

IT'S week 3 of the sit-in at Gardners, and positions are hardening. Despite everything support is growing all the time, with more and more people taking part. At times there's barely enough room in the canteen to get everyone in.

The main problem the workers face is financial. Although the dispute has been made official by the AUEW, it will be some time before strike pay starts coming through and the Social Security are doing their best to stop people getting anything. They are insisting that all sorts of documents be produced before they pay out and even though the CPSA locally have tried to speed things up, there are many that haven't had a penny. Some of the workforce can't even afford the bus fare to get to the factory.

Donations are starting to come in. In one local factory, Thermalite, 12 AUEW members have pledged to donate £50 a week and G&M members are pro-

## Vanguard in the jobs fight

All united for the big fight

Convenor Tom Macafee told Socialist Organiser:

"The workforce have got to stop thinking of this as a parochial dispute. This has taken on proportions that we didn't think of at first, so we've got to win. We didn't want to become the vanguard in the fight against unemployment but we're prepared to play that role provided we get the support."

"We've got an army here and we've got to get them out around the country. That's what we need the money for and we're aiming for £¼ million. We're going to organise mobile teams so we'll need accommodation."

"People might have to stay out for 2 or 3 days in any one place. We need support committees set up from Labour and trade union organisations in every area."

"We don't want sectarianism in this dispute. We don't care who supports us. No one's been turned away from the gates. We want the left to unite to help in a concerted effort. We want to prove to these Tory bastards that, although we may be divided on political issues, when there's a big fight on we're all united."

New Management". That's the alternative to the dole queue. If a firm like Hawker Siddeley can't afford to keep its workforce employed then it should step aside. Nationalise it without compensation and with the workers in charge. Let's hope that signs like that at Gardners start appearing outside a lot more factories this winter.

All donations to Dave Marsden, 187 Barton Lane, Eccles, Manchester.

PETE KEENLYSIDE

### We need £500 a month

RATTLING little buckets on the last day of the Labour Conference, the Socialist Organiser 'Briefing' team collected £40 in small change from hundreds of delegates — plus comments that SO had the 'best briefing', was 'excellent', and had 'done a wonderful service for conference delegates'.

We didn't get anywhere near covering the cost of the thousands of sheets of paper we distributed.

It was worth it. Our message got across to hundreds of activists. But we can't keep it up — unless you do something.

We have managed to increase our sales, by widening our network of sellers and subscribers — but we're still running at a loss.

We need money urgently if we are to be able to grow and keep growing. We need £500 a month from our supporters and readers.

What do we need the money for?

- Materials to improve the look of the paper.

- To cover the cost of getting people round the country to do speaking tours.

- To provide a better back-up service for our supporters — regular information on coming events and campaigns, and 'hard-ware' for demonstrations — leaflets and placards.

Socialist Organiser can grow quickly if our new support is reflected in money terms.

Supporters all round the country should be organising socials, jumble sales, and more adventurous activities to raise money. And don't forget small-scale fund-raising, either: collections at meetings, 10p or 50p extra from people buying the paper.

Send in money to Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16. Cheques payable to Socialist Organiser, please.

viding food. The APEX branch in Massey Ferguson have sent £50 and Trafford Trades Council, as well as making a donation have circulated all affiliated unions with appeal sheets. But things are still going slowly. The target is to raise £250,000, not just to help those with money problems, but to finance the various delegations that are going to be sent and they're still a long way off from that. They need the money now so fellow trade unionists and particularly those in other Hawker Siddeley factories had

better get cracking.

The management, meanwhile, are refusing even to negotiate on the issue of the 590 redundancies. They seem more interested in stirring mud in the local press with stories about how the vote to occupy was rigged. "We aren't even bothering to comment on it", said Tom Williamson, chairman of the Shop Stewards' Committee. "What happened was that a group of people came to the meeting determined to vote against and they all stood together. All they saw was their mates

voting. The shed where the meeting took place is so big and there were that many people there that the only place you could possibly have seen how the vote went from was from the platform."

The sit-in at Gardner's puts the whole labour movement on trial. A lot of words have been spoken about fighting unemployment and now's the time to see if there's anything behind them. The leadership of the unions involved, especially the AUEW, must be forced to put their full resources behind the

workers there. The NEC of the Labour Party can also help by instructing all Party branches to take up the issue by collecting money and organising meetings with a speaker from Gardners.

But as usual the rank and file will probably have to do most of the work. Supporters of SO should make sure that their union branch or stewards' committee supports the sit-in. The Gardner workers have said they're prepared to send speakers anywhere so invite them to your workplace or, better still, arrange a tour of the main factories in the area. Get local trade union and Labour Party branches to set up support committees to arrange accommodation and finance for visiting delegations.

The workers at Gardners are fighting for all of us. Win and they'll not only have boosted the fight for the right to work, they'll have blasted a huge hole in the Tory strategy of making the workers pay for the crisis. It could be the start of the movement that will sweep the Tories away for once and all. The sign outside the factory reads "Workers' Sit-In — under

Photo: John Smith (IFL)



### Duffy engineers another sell-out

THE NATIONAL claim from the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions has been sold out yet again by Terry Duffy.

The claim was for 20%, but they sold us out for 8.2%, which is only £6 on the minimum time rate for skilled workers.

by PETE LEYDEN  
(AUEW Birmingham West DC, personal capacity)

From the start Duffy made it clear that he didn't want to fight. In fact at the first meeting with the employers he agreed that they could not afford the 20% claim!

Although the national claim does not affect many workers' basic wages, it does make a big difference to shift and overtime premiums.

The question of hours was not even discussed, because the Confed leaders accepted that last year's agreement on hours should last until 1983.

They did raise the question of overtime and the need to cut it back, but the bosses said they could not reduce the 11 million hours overtime worked per week

across the country because it did not suit them to have to employ more workers. Duffy and the others accepted this and put up no fight at all.

What can you say about the union leadership that first agrees with the bosses that your claim is unrealistic and then tells them in advance that there is no danger of a strike? What more and more engineers are saying: Stuff the Duff, vote Bob Wright.

But regardless of the outcome of the present AUEW election, rank and file engineering workers must organise nationally to kick out these scabs and put the union under the control of its members.

### King Henrys: the blacking bites

BLACKING AT King Henry's is really biting hard. The bosses have lost so many of their regular orders that they have had to go round local chippies and shops to get new orders, so far with not much success.

The 11 strikers arrested by the Tactical Aid Group (Manchester's SPG) have had their case adjourned to 11th and 12th November. Another picket of the magistrates' court is being organised for those dates. Regular mass pickets are also being held at the factory every Tuesday and Friday.

Donations: Bakers' Union, Room 4, George House, 30 Dudley Rd, Manchester 14.

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To make Socialist Organiser a real campaigning paper that can organise the left in the movement, it needs its own organised activist support — and money.

Local supporters' groups are being established in most major towns to build a real base for the paper.

Supporters are being asked to undertake to sell a minimum of 6 papers an issue and to contribute at least £1 a month (20p for unwaged). So becoming a supporter helps build our circulation and gives the paper a firmer financial base.

If you like Socialist Organiser, think it's doing a good job, but realise that it can't possibly do enough unless you help, become a card-carrying supporter.

Fill in the form below and return to:  
Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

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CLP .....

Trade Union .....